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MUSSER

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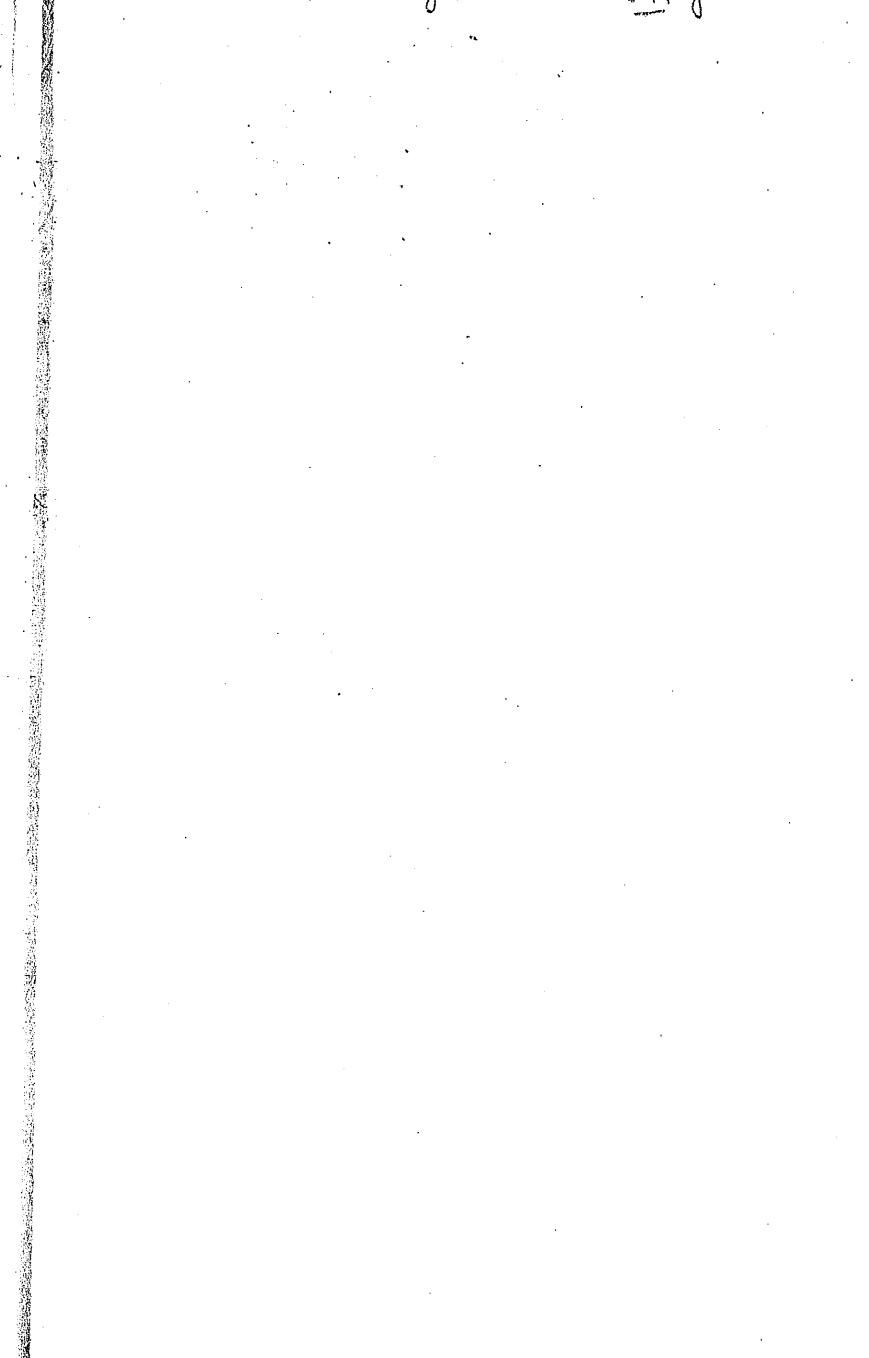
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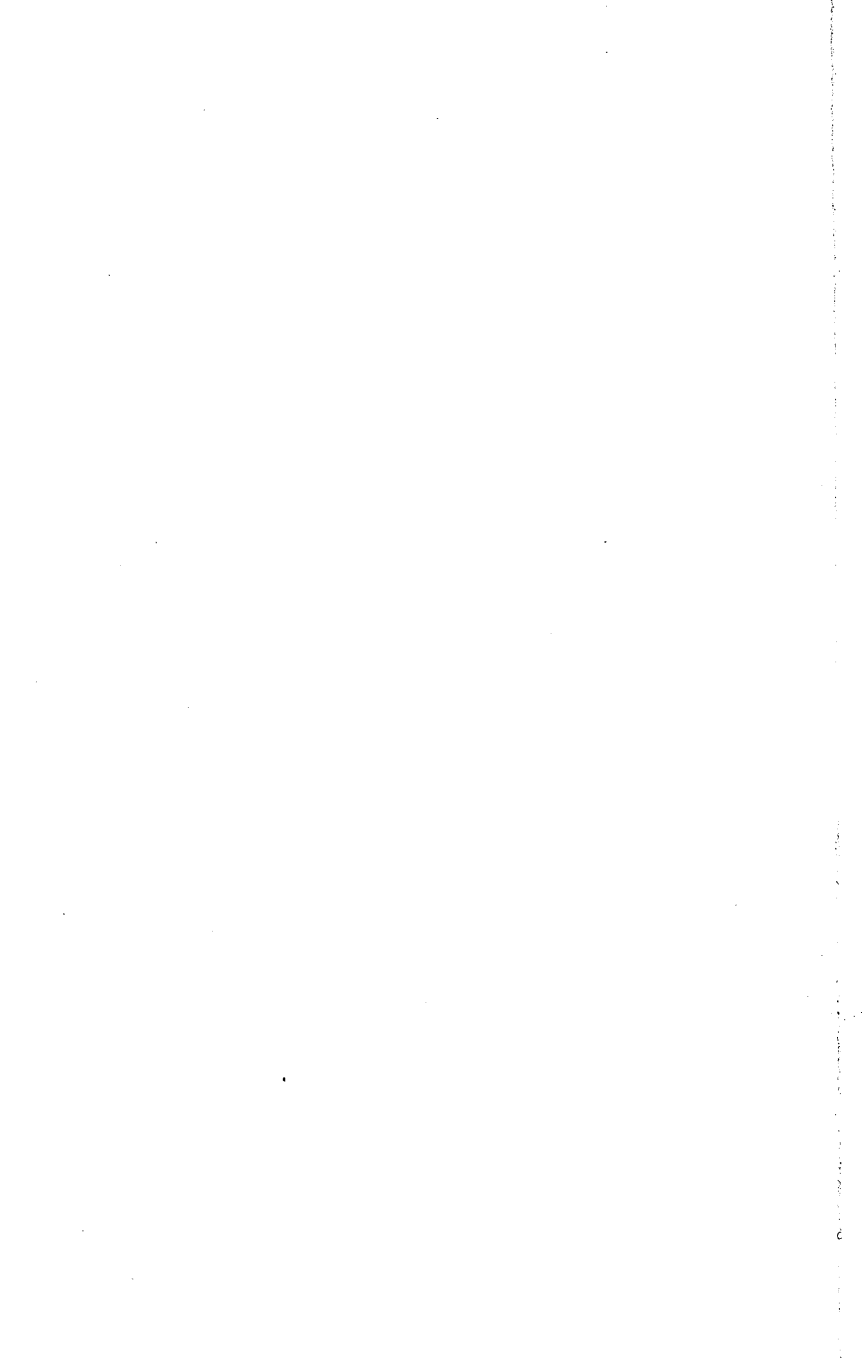
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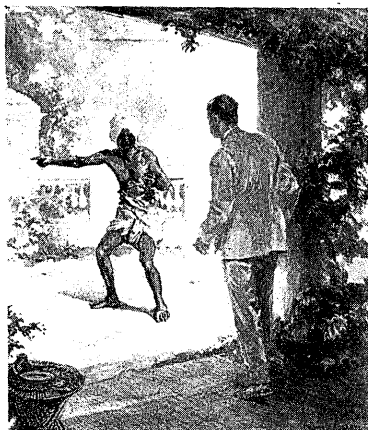


JUNGLE TALES

HOWARD ANDERSON MUSSER



WHAT KEPT ME FROM FIRING? I CAN'T SAY.



"SAHIB!" HE CRIED, BREATH-
LESSLY, "PERSECUTIONS AGAIN!
IN THE BASTAR JUNGLES!"

JUNGLE TALES

Adventures in India

BY

HOWARD ANDERSON MUSSER

Illustrated by

THOMAS FOGARTY



NEW YORK

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JUNGLE TALES. I

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

***I** f you were a boy in India—
You would often feel terrified. Tigers, bears, panthers, leopards, and wild boar teem in the jungle, and the Arms Act forbids natives to have firearms.*

You would feel hungry. Millions of Hindus go through life without once having a full stomach.

You would feel hopeless. Out of a thousand Hindus only fifty ever learn to read. Almost all are desperately poor—average income, five cents a day. As there is no democracy in India, if you were born low down in the social scale you must remain there. A rigid caste system, centuries old and sanctioned by the Hindu religion, forbids you to rise.

But perhaps you would not feel at all, as it is more than likely that by this time you would be dead. Because of cholera, plague, smallpox, and famine, to say nothing of unsanitary homes and

the ravages of wild beasts, fifteen babies out of every sixteen die before they reach the age of two.

No wonder, then, that Americans gladly go as missionaries to India! They go to carry to the Hindus a new religion. True, the natives are amazingly religious already. For his religion's sake a Hindu will tear out his tongue or pluck out his eye or lie for forty years on a bed of spikes. But his is the religion that maintains the caste system, reserving education and prosperity for the few and dooming the many to utter misery and degradation. So the American missionary in India is fighting Hinduism with Christianity; he is saving the Hindus from poverty, from disease, from ignorance, from hopelessness, from the crushing tyranny of the caste system.

There are now 2,500,000 native Christians in India. Their numbers increase with astounding rapidity. Whole villages at a time, the natives are renouncing their heathen faith and their heathen ways and hastening the day when India, now a land of cruelest oppression, will become a land of liberty and happiness.

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I: *Gani*

JUNGLE TALES

I

Gani

THERE are times when the jungle turns all tawny and dry in the terrific heat, and then may come fires. The jungle aflame is a fearful prospect, more dreaded than cholera or famine or wild beasts or all other deadly plagues of India combined.

It was during such a time that I received a most alarming message, late one day, from a village miles and miles off in the depths of the Bastar jungles. Ever since dawn we had sweltered beneath punkas in our mission bungalow, and when, rather to our surprise, we found ourselves still alive at half-past four in the afternoon, I screwed my courage up to the sticking place and ventured out on the veranda, and stood

there a moment, gazing across the lawn where our gardener was sprinkling the parched grass in vain efforts to make us comfortable.

I felt weak and ill and generally worthless, and if you had told me I was about to launch out upon adventures leading up to the thrill of a lifetime, I should have heard you through listlessly and—yawned.

A stone wall, breast high, seemed to quiver in the heat next the road—or at any rate when you looked just past the top of that wall everything was in motion, dancing—and it sickened me, and I was about to step back indoors when, to my astonishment, I beheld a native runner dashing headlong up the road and hailing me with an upraised arm, and I shall never forget the hand—a horror-stricken hand, with fingers spread wide apart and hooked, denoting intense excitement.

My first thought was, "Fires!" My next was, "But why is he coming to me about that?" And then—oddly enough, for I had never taken much stock in such rumors, "Is it possible that the stories about a wild man in the jungle are true, and that some of our native Christians have sent

word to me?" Queer ideas will pop into one's head late in the afternoon of a desperately hot day in India, and perhaps the heat was what accounted for this one.

Without waiting to reach my gate, the runner gripped the top of the wall and flung himself over, and there were no salaams from that Hindu as he bounded toward me, his four-fifths naked brown body all glistening with sweat.

"Sahib!" he cried, breathlessly, "persecutions again! In the Bastar jungles! Houses destroyed! Six native Christians savagely beaten up! Four of them dying when the news came! Threats to murder every native Christian there!"

So it was not fires—yet. It had nothing to do with those stories of a wild man in the forest. It was worse. I grew suddenly cold, then hotter than the heat of sizzling India, for you can't begin to conceive how precious our native Christians are to a missionary. It is not alone because we have saved them from the barbarous heathenism that bids Hindus toss babies to sacred crocodiles, and worship venomous cobras in their houses, and collect the scales from smallpox victims and pass them around until every one

gets the disease, to the glory of Devi, the small-pox goddess. We are doing more—freeing them from the awful tyranny of caste.

For our converts come chiefly from among the Pariahs—lowest of the low in the Hindu social order—outcasts—untouchables. Not long ago the little son of a high-caste Hindu tumbled into a well, and a Pariah who happened to be passing by at the time offered to risk his life in an attempt to get the little boy out. But no! For a Pariah to save the boy would be a breach of caste and would forever pollute the well; so they let the child die.

But, once a Pariah becomes a Christian, he puts himself outside the caste system. He can gain an education, and rise, and perhaps win a fairly distinguished position—not a few of our converts have done so. And those Christians of ours in the Bastar jungles had a particularly strong hold on my heart, for there were a lot of fine young lads among them, and in India I specialized on boys.

You understand, now, why I felt as I did when that dripping native runner brought the news. I said to him, "I'm going there at once!"

He replied, "Sahib, it is a dangerous time to go."

"I know it," said I. "There may be fires."

"And the persecutions are terrible, Sahib. You may be murdered," he cried.

I laughed. For, despite my incurable and enthusiastic Americanism, I was a chaplain in the British Army, with the rank of captain, and as such could lay a firm hand on matters, granted only that I got there in time.

I said to the runner, "If you will serve us as guide, we'll be off as soon as I can drum up a squad of our native men and get the bullock carts loaded."

With a deep salaam, he agreed. (Have I explained that he was a Christian? He was; but one grows so accustomed to meeting Christian natives that it makes no great impression and one easily forgets to emphasize it.)

I suppose it was because of the heat and my nervous, worn-out condition that, while our preparations were under way, I thought again of the wild man. Only for a moment, however. "A foolish idea!" I said, laughing at myself

for having entertained such a notion, and dismissed it.

Half an hour later we set forth in three lumbering bullock carts with solid wooden wheels—one cart for me, one for my men, and another for our supplies in tin trunks—and bumped along, rattlety-bang, over roads where parched tiger grass seven feet high scratched drily against our caravan and roads that ducked beneath once luscious foliage now bleached a sere yellow and roads that led us among rocks that sizzled in the heat; and—what was that, away off yonder a little before nightfall? What indeed? It looked like a whitish cloud, trailing close to the horizon, but as I watched I thought I could see movement in it—a slow, wriggling, ominous, upward swirl. Smoke!

It is not swift going, with bullocks—we often wish we could use horses, but the deadly climate of India forbids—and when night closed in we were not much nearer the cloud. However, we knew its nature, now, for it reddened. “Sahib!” cried an excited voice from the cart ahead of mine. “The jungles off there are ablaze!” Yet no one suggested turning back. No one so much

as thought of it, though presently we began to sniff the odor of burning leaves, and one of my drivers said, "The wild man had better keep out of *there!*"

Ever since the Mutiny, British rule in India has feared a fresh uprising, and that is why the English maintain a system of fine, broad military roads, so that troops can be concentrated, speedily, where most needed, and before very long we came out upon one of these roads. I was glad. The carts bumped less cruelly, and there was hope of a night's sleep, and if we ran into the thick of a jungle fire, well, at least we should have a wide highway to travel. It sounds incredible, but I slept all night; and when morning came, and our worn-out bullock drivers handed over their jobs to the set who drove by day, the whole sky above us was yellowish with smoke and the sun was an orange-colored disc, and we could see flames leaping and spurting in the parched forests to left and right of the road, while the heat was insufferable and showers of soot were raining down everywhere.

I felt exceedingly anxious. The one thing I most wanted was speed, and speed seemed the

one thing least possible of attainment. The fine road was to our advantage—in ordinary circumstances, we could have hurried along it at a fairly gratifying clip; but, because of the heat from burning jungles, plus the heat from a pitiless sun, I foresaw that we should have to stop at every pool to let the bullocks slake their thirst and the men drench their dhotis, and, while we were making headway so slowly, what would become of those persecuted native Christians, and what would become of us? Our supplies would run short.

Precisely this happened. Early in the morning of the third day, as I lay in my cart with a wet towel around my head and a bit of canvas stretched above it for shelter against the sun, one of my men reached in and pulled my leg. It was not the first time he had pulled my leg, for alas, he was my cook!

I sat up, and said in Telugu, "Well, Anton, what is it?" and added, jokingly, "Have you seen the wild man?"

A Hindu with a Portuguese name may seem queer, but Anton's father and mother had perished during a great famine, and the boy was

taken charge of by a missionary who had lived among the Portuguese in South East India. It was there that he got his name, and developed a perfect genius for acquiring languages. He had learned at least seven native tongues—Marathi, which is Aryan; Hindi; Hindustani, which is mixed; Gujarathi; Telugu; Koi; and Bengali.

When I asked why he had pulled my leg, he said, dolefully, "*Maja potearwar bhut lagale ahet!*"—"Hunger has come and sat down on my stomach."

"And on mine, too," said I, "and it has sat down harder than any wild man could. But be patient and we'll see if we can't scare up something to eat," for I saw a stretch of forest ahead where the flames had not yet swept through, and it was reasonable to assume that any number of wild creatures must have taken refuge there.

When we came to the still unharmed stretch of woods, I halted our caravan and held up my hand for silence, and the instant our clumsy cart wheels stopped rattling, we heard a telltale snapping of twigs, and saw—or thought we saw—vague forms slinking about furtively in the jungle.

I took down my rifle from its sling (it was too hot to hold by the barrel, so I gripped the stock) and, as I was descending from my cart, Anton called out, "Sahib, I will go into the forest and try to stalk something—perhaps a herd of wild pig," and in he plunged, carrying only a light ax, for natives are forbidden to use firearms.

The wild pigs are very much sought after by the natives and many hunters. They live in the forest and dig about among the roots and grasses, but when disturbed they dash about snorting and dodging here and there, trying to get away. If the pig is caught, everyone is delighted, for he is soon ready to be eaten.

While Anton was thrashing around in the jungle, I ran out in front of our caravan and stood at "ready," with my finger on the trigger itching for a shot. The long road gleamed white and hot ahead. Occasionally I caught sight of a frolicsome monkey or heard a wood pigeon call softly to its mate. I was not nervous. I knew the ways of the jungle of old and had no fear of missing a shot at whatever game Anton stirred up. A wild animal will rush through

the underbrush to the edge of the road and then stop and poke its head out to make sure that the coast is clear before crossing. Then is the moment to let drive. It is an easy shot; only, you must be quick.

Anton had gone quite a distance back into the forest, and I began to get a little anxious about him, for those woods were a perfect tangle of drooping boughs, snarled creepers, and dry, crisp undergrowth, so that, once Anton had put a few yards of jungle between us, he was entirely lost to view. And I knew by the continued snapping of twigs that he was not alone in there. Suppose a tiger should spring upon him—or a black panther. Or suppose a bear should come swaggering with savage paw upraised, to tear his face right off; it is a way bears have in India.

I was in the midst of these worries when, "*Suur ate hai!*" he cried—"The wild pig is coming!"—and at any rate something was. It dashed through the leaves and tangled vines and grass, and, without a pause for safety's sake, hurled itself out at one bound. What kept me from firing? Perplexity? Inquisitiveness? A desire to discover what species of jungle beast

could behave like that? I can't say, but I soon saw that, had I fired, I should have killed, not a little wild pig, but a little naked wild boy about six years old—the cause of all those rumors.

I dropped my rifle. For a moment I gazed at him, spellbound. He was running on all fours like an animal.

He halted and rose up from his running posture, and looked first at me and then at the forest, and, while the shock of amazement still numbed me, flung himself back into the jungle.

For half a second I thought I must have been out of my head and “seeing things,” but there went up a great shout from my men in the waiting carts, and I realized that they, too, had seen it.

But now, on top of the horrible experience of so near killing a little boy, came the misery of having him get away. I had a boy of my own, safe and sound at home, and knew only too well what it would mean if, like this poor, naked waif, he were running wild in the jungle, with fires eating their way nearer and nearer every moment.

I sprinted for the place where he had sprung

back into the forest, saw a hole in the dry grass, and plunged in, determined to keep the trail and catch up with him. But a great many wild beasts had broken their way through, leaving trails in every direction, and I was soon at a loss to know which was his.

Just then Anton shouted, "Sahib! Come quickly! It's a little wild boy!" and I heard a prolonged dry swish of parched undergrowth, and followed the sound, and reached Anton only to find that he, too, had lost the trail.

I was about to raise a grand hullaballoo and get the men from the caravan to join us in the hunt when, from among the rocks not far ahead, came a queer scratching, scraping sound, and a low whimper. We made for those rocks, and saw, sticking out from between two of them, the bare legs of a little brown boy, who was trying to burrow in there and hide. I grabbed hold of those legs, and pulled, and got him out.

What a fight he made of it then—spitting like a cat, biting a piece out of Anton's leg as big as a half dollar, and clawing me so savagely that I bear the scars to this day!

I tore long strips from my shirt and tied his

hands behind him and bound his ankles together, and, though he struggled like an infant lunatic, caught him up in my arms and carried him to the road, where a fine whoop of applause went up from my men as they came running to get a look at him.

He was not a beauty. Far from it. He had cross-eyes and a snarled and matted mane of greasy black hair, and the worst temper you can imagine. But, considered purely as a show, he was up to the mark and more. Wild? Oh, splendidly, amazingly wild! When we tried to get him to talk, we found that he had forgotten how. Even his cry was wild—a kind of yowl. And, in addition to his other charms, he was a complete mystery.

I put him in my cart and left Anton to look after him while I went and picked up the rifle with which I had come so near killing the boy. I was in no mood to shoot anything now, and we no longer cared how energetically hunger “sat down on our stomachs.” Our one, vivid desire was to hurry forward, not only because of those persecuted native Christians, but on account of the little boy we had captured. I went

back to my cart and clambered in, and away we started.

Fortunately, we had not a very great distance left to go. Still more fortunately, we soon passed the fires and left them behind us altogether and could breathe freely again; and by midday we came in sight of the village from which the appeal for help had reached me, and, sure enough, there were gaps along its edges where the houses of native Christians had been burned by their persecutors.

“Sahib,” cried our guide, the native runner, “let me carry the news of our coming,” and, hardly waiting for my assent, dashed away at top speed down the road, and presently disappeared among the nearer huts; sooner than you would have imagined possible he emerged, leading a throng of overjoyed Christians. They swarmed around our caravan in a perfect hubbub of delight, and brought us food, and simply tumbled over one another to pay us homage. But the main attraction, I must confess, was the little wild boy in my cart.

Gossip travels fast in a Hindu village, and the next I knew, the entire population was out and

crowding around us, all atingle with inquisitiveness, and I had just the chance I wanted. I stood up in my cart, and, after explaining how we had caught the wild boy, lit into them good and strong about persecutions. The native Christians had been forbidden to draw water from the village well. All such oppression must stop. Several of them had been beaten up. The outrage must not be repeated. Houses had been burned. Nothing of the kind must happen again. Why? Because I, who said so, was a captain in the British Army.

It is years, now, since I have talked so to the natives, but there have been no reports of persecutions in all that while. I give the credit mainly to the little wild boy, to whom I owed the opportunity of dealing with the villagers in a body.

When I had finished speaking, a wizened old Hindu came up to me, salaamed reverentially, and said, "Sahib, there are people here who think they know who that little wild boy is. Three years ago, a woman who lived in a village not far from ours took her child to the priest and said, 'This youngster of mine is cross-eyed. Why is that?' And the priest said, 'The devil is in him.

Put the child out into the jungle and let him die.'

"For a long time she refused to obey, but the people of her village taunted her with being a witch and keeping a witch child, and began persecuting her. No one would enter her house, or sell her anything, or even speak to her; so at last she yielded and put the little fellow out, and he went away into the jungle.

"He was three years old then, and they say his name was Gani."

"But where is his mother now?"

"Dead, Sahib. All his folks are dead. The cholera came, Sahib, and wiped out the entire village—even the dogs and cats."

So this was the story—credible enough when you come to think of it. For it is not hard for a boy to get along in the jungle. There is plenty to eat—jungle persimmons and mangoes, berries like a long plum and full of seeds, and a kind of tuber that resembles a boiled sweet potato and grows on plants that look like May trees, and there are lots of other things besides. Of course some man-eating beast may come sneaking up, any moment, and devour the boy, but man-eating beasts are few as nothing short

of dire starvation itself tempts a beast to feed on human flesh. That is lucky for the beast. Once a man-eater, always a man-eater, and a short lived man-eater into the bargain, for the animal gets mangy and his teeth fall out, and some other animal soon eats him.

We took Gani to our Methodist orphanage at Sironcha, eighty-five miles away, and it was a tough time we had of it trying to civilize him. During those three years in the jungle he had not only forgotten how to talk, but had almost forgotten how to walk—never stood erect, but went crouching—and when we put clothes on him, he angrily tore them all off.

We quartered him in a storeroom and sawed a hole in the door, and through the hole we splashed water on him for a bath, and tossed in green stuff for him to eat, as he refused cooked food, and one day I reached in and nabbed him and, much to his indignation, cut his hair.

There were about sixty native lads in our orphanage and at first they called Gani "the little deaf and dumb boy," but we soon realized that he was not deaf. Even when he was slouching up and down the storeroom like a caged animal and

seemed utterly wild and brutish, he would stop to listen if he heard singing, and, as the head master had a beautiful singing voice, Gani grew fond of him. But it was two whole years before we could get the little fellow to talk.

One day Gani found out that he himself could sing. That was the turning point. He began to grow gentle, and we could see fine possibilities in him, and when once we were able to let him out of his storeroom and throw him in with the other boys, he rapidly got to be like them—so much so, in fact, that you would never have guessed from what depths of hideous savagery he had come up.

Now, when you have snatched a boy out of a plight like Gani's and civilized him, and given him an education, and shown him what Christianity impels people to do, there comes a time when he develops a fierce hatred for the monstrous heathenism all around and wants to go out and fight it tooth and nail. No wonder! A Hindu priest had ordered Gani turned loose in the jungle, and Hindu priests are ordering as outrageous things done every day. "Down with Hinduism!" became the cry of Gani's heart.

Fourteen years have gone by since the morning

I came near shooting Gani in the jungle. He is a man, now—and a power. If he possessed a talent for public speaking, I believe he would be hammering at the foundations of Hinduism with a terrible ferocity, but he has a talent ten times as persuasive—the talent, that is, for singing. Into the native language we missionaries have put the story of our faith, and set it to music, and in villages where the people would scorn a preacher they can't help welcoming a singer. So from native village to native village goes Gani, and in the evening he gathers a squatting circle of native Christians around him, and outside that circle stands a great multitude of heathen folk, while others congregate on housetops, and there, beneath the velvety deep blue Eastern sky, Gani sings the glowing story that has power to undermine cruelty and oppression and ignorance and misery and to humanize the degraded and set them free. Among the living forces actuating the landslide toward Christianity in India, there is none more effectual than Gani.

My blood runs cold when I remember that I almost shot him.

II: *Tigers—But Especially Bears*

II

Tigers—But Especially Bears

FOR excitement and high thrills, I know of nothing to equal a missionary's life in the jungles of India, where wild beasts roam at large, and you hear and see them, and they hear and see you and there are encounters that fairly freeze a man's blood—chance meetings with tigers, for instance, and especially with bears. Speaking personally and for myself alone, I prefer tigers, though I confess that I hate awfully to fight a tiger on the ground.

Tigers in India are shot mostly from trees. When a native finds a "kill"—that is, the body of a man or bullock partly eaten and left for a day or so while the tiger lies by in a lair, the native runs and tells the local authorities. They in their turn notify the nearest Civil Service sahib, who hurries to the spot, builds a nest or machan about twenty feet above the ground in a tree

close to the kill, clambers up into it, and sits there until the beast comes slouching back for another meal. Then, from his position of entire safety, he pops a rifle at the tiger—and calls it sport!

If no kill has been found, but a tiger is reported lurking about, the Civil Service man gets a bullock, drives four stakes into the ground, ties the bullock's legs to the stakes, ties his ears shut to make him bawl, and builds a machan in a tree near-by and crawls up into it at dusk. If you are a greenhorn at tiger hunting and go out with a Civil Service man to lure the big brute in this style, you may expect the shock of a lifetime, for when the tiger hears the bullock bawling in the night he comes toward it with great leaps, purring and growling savagely, all his lust for blood aroused, and, with a roar that shakes the forest, charges the bullock, snarling and biting and trying to rip it loose. Greenhorns have been known to fall out of the machan from fright—yes, actually.

But I was not in India for sport. I had gone there as a missionary to introduce our American idea of faith and straight living in a region as big as Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska and peopled

with 5,000,000 acutely miserable Hindus, many of whom got their first glimpse of a white man when I looked in on them. However, I have twice come within speaking distance of tigers—on foot! For, although we travel by bullock cart, there is a lot of walking to do, as somebody must trudge ahead with lantern and rifle after dark, and I think I must have walked at least five thousand miles during my ten years in the jungle.

But now and then we strike a smooth stretch of road and one feels a strong temptation to crawl into a cart for a nap. One night I yielded to it, and let a guide with a lantern and a pair of ferocious cudgels take my place out ahead. It was a pitch dark night. Trees overhung the road, the vine-fringed branches grazing the tops of our carts, while tiger grass seven feet high swished against the hubs. We were miles from a village.

I don't know how long I slept, but I know that I awoke with a jerk at the shout of "*Dekho, sahib, ekmoto wagh nasdik ahe—dus foot lam-ba!*"—"Master, a big tiger ten feet long is nearby!"—from Anton, my native Christian servant.

Seizing my rifle, I sprang out and followed Anton, who ran on ahead with a lantern and showed me a great hole in the grass down low, and, pointing to it excitedly said, "He went in there, sahib!" We were walking along half asleep when we came on him lying there in the road, and the guide said, "Sir, get out of our way!" but the beast made teeth at us. We threw stones and he got up and made more teeth at us and went in there.

I took a lantern from our guide's trembling hand, and crawled along through the hole in the grass for about fifty feet after the tiger, but silence was everywhere, and, realizing that I was doing a foolhardy thing, I returned to my cart, and at dawn we reached our camping place, and when the "dudh walla," or milkman, came past with his brass pots, I asked him if there were any wild animals about.

"Sir," he replied, "last evening in our village a few miles up the road, there was a happy family in their hut and the father played with his little son. He will never do so again. He went out into the jungle to cut wood, and a great tiger

seized him, and we followed to its lair, and heard the tiger crunching his bones.”

So this—clearly—was the beast he had encountered. Gorged with human flesh, he had chosen the road as a quiet place to lie down and digest his first meal before returning for the next.

Oh, well, failing to catch up with a tiger in India is no great calamity. You will soon meet another. I did.

Not long afterward, we happened to be traveling by daylight through a lonely, dangerous region four days away from a railroad and twenty miles from the nearest village. My cart came last in a caravan of six, heavily loaded with native men, women, and children going to our Methodist district conference at Sironcha.

Suddenly from far ahead there went up a wild shriek of alarm, audible above the rumbling of the cart wheels, though I could not make out the words. The carts halted abruptly. Again I heard the cry, every syllable now distinct: “*Lowker ikerdi ye, sahib! Ek wagh hai!*”—“Come quickly, master! Here is a tiger!”

I was the only man armed, so upon me de-

volved the duty of driving the creature away. If he were an ordinary tiger, intent only on securing a bullock, he would not be very hard to frighten; but suppose he should turn out to be a man-eater.

I got down my jungle "cannon," as the natives called it—and old, twelve-bore, double-barreled rifle weighting fourteen pounds—and, edging my way around the hubs of the carts, came out in front of the foremost one. It was full of yelling men and women, pale from terror, and the bullocks strained at their yokes trying to get loose, while, a hundred feet away in the middle of the road, crouched a magnificent tiger, looking wonderfully beautiful and fascinating.

I was not happy. No one enjoys coming face to face with a tiger in the open road, and besides, there was the awful sense of responsibility. If I flinched and showed the white feather or if I let excitement spoil my aim, I should see the work of years undone in an instant. All my hold on those native Christians would vanish, I knew. But I also knew the ways of tigers, and I think you will agree with me that they are not nice ways.

Unless he is a man-eater, the habit of the beast is to halt a string of carts, crawl up slowly on the head bullocks, stalk them until they go back into their yokes with fear, and then suddenly leap toward them with a mighty bound. When they break loose and rush into the jungle, the tiger singles out the one he wants, and is after it in a flash. If he is a man-eater, he expects the bullocks to overturn the cart in their frenzy and let him select a victim from among the sprawling travelers.

The great striped brute off yonder was crouching for his spring as I came out in front of our caravan. He had his tail up in the air and crooked at the tip like a railroad signal stopping a train, while on his breast gleamed the snowy-white spot no marksman can miss unless he has a "funk" on.

I dropped on one knee, aimed straight at the beautiful breast, and, not without a sharp pang of remorse as the tiger caught sight of me, pulled both triggers. Down he lurched into the dust with a roar and then a deep, gurgling sound, but with the tip of his tail still aloft, and that was the end of the tiger.

Out from their carts piled the darkfaced crowd, and joined hands, and danced around him, shouting joyously, "*Are baberi dushman margyia!*"—"Oh, father, our enemy is dead!" They treated him with great indignity now—kicked him, twisted his tail, and pulled out his whiskers for souvenirs. I soon had him skinned, and as we started away at top speed to make up for lost time, I thought of the folks back home in America who think missionaries to the Hindus must lead pretty uneventful lives. Whereas, we don't; for there are not only tigers in the jungle, but bears as well, and, while it is of course a mere matter of taste, I would rather meet a tiger any day than a bear.

When they stand up on their groggy hind legs the savage, big, black bears of India are as tall as a big brown Hindu, and, while they would rather maul a garden, any time, than eat a man, they have hairtrigger tempers and a mere nothing will infuriate them, and then their instinct follows a set rule always. Instead of grappling with you like a grizzly, the big black bear's idea is to lift a huge paw with long, merciless claws, and hit you a downward swipe that tears your

face right off. The natives know this, and have learned how to duck.

Suppose a bear hears a woodchopper in the jungle hacking at a bamboo, and, on swift, padded feet, charges for the spot. If he is warned in time, the woodchopper falls flat on his face, grips the jungle grass with both hands and hangs on for dear life. After a few vain attempts to turn him over, the bear rakes him down the back ferociously, and lets it go at that.

Not long ago I set out to visit the industrial village we were maintaining in Central India eighty miles from my mission station, and the way led through jungles swarming with tigers, leopards, wolves, deer, wildcats, wild dogs, and deadly serpents, to say nothing of bears. We arrived late in the evening and my native Christian helpers and I were unloading our three bullock carts when suddenly I heard a great hullabaloo afar off in the dusk, and there came sounds of snapping twigs and swishing undergrowth, and a group of horror-stricken native men bounded out from the edge of a deep thicket, and ran headlong toward us, and one of them shouted, between gasps for breath, "Bears,

sahib—three enormous big bears! They chased us! And there's a fourth. We—saw him!"

Quite a lot of villagers popped out, and came hurrying up to hear the story, but they took it with very remarkable composure, I thought until, presently, I learned that the bears had come to be more or less of a standing institution. For weeks, the four big brutes had been snooping about the fringes of the village, scaring women and children and occasionally a man and keeping timid folks indoors after sundown, as natives are not allowed to have firearms.

It was up to me, clearly. These were my people, and I, being the only man possessed of firearms, must protect them. Notice, please, I say "must." It was not a mere case of "ought." If I showed a yellow streak, I should not only be leaving these folks exposed to mortal danger, I should bring contempt upon our vast missionary campaign.

"Tell me," I said to the men who had just come running up. "Where was it that you saw the bears?"

"In there, sahib. Beyond the thicket. Out in a great open field."

I seized my rifle, giving an extra one to Anton, and together we plunged through the thicket. It was almost dark by this time, and yet, as we neared the farther edge of the thicket, where trees were wide apart again and we could look out across the field, there, sure enough were the bears, dimly yet only too awesomely visible about three hundred yards away, and we heard them grunting as they ripped up the earth in search of roots and white ants! Whoof! Whoof! Whoof!—like that.

Now, when you hunt one sort of game in India, you must not be too much astonished if another sort hunts you. As we stole ahead, silently as we knew how, toward the clearing, in hope of getting close enough to risk a shot, we passed near a stout palm tree with branches ten or twelve feet long, their tips touching the ground, and in one side of its huge trunk there was a large hole.

I was ahead and had just gone past the hole when—whoop-la!—out thundered a great, blood-thirsty wild boar as high as a table and as thick as a sewing machine. Head down, he came like a shot, butted Anton in the knees, knocked him

flat, rushed on, whirled, and, with savage tusks out, charged straight at the prostrate body to disembowel it.

Half stunned by the fall, Anton had let go of his rifle, and I knew I must fire, though I realized, even in the midst of my excitement, that I might kill Anton instead of the boar.

I let drive. Hurrah! Down flopped six hundred pounds of wild boar—almost on Anton. But what was this? To my horror, I heard Anton groan, "I'm dead! I'm dead!" Had the shot gone through the beast and hit the man?

It was only fright. Wondrously relieved, I ran and helped Anton up; whereupon he went down on his knees to me, and hugged my legs, and cried, gratefully, "I will never leave you, sahib, no matter what happens. I will never leave you day or night." I little guessed how soon he was to prove his devotion, though I knew from of old that native Christians in India keep their word. They are fidelity itself. We have more than three hundred thousand native Christians in India now, and after ten years' experience I have still to hear of a backslider—and this despite persecution that is sometimes all but in-

credible in its barbarity. Really, I can think of nothing more amazing than their splendid loyalty.

Of course the shot that laid low the wild boar frightened away the bears, but we tagged along after them, and came to a river bank, and, more by good luck than good wit, succeeded in finding the cave where they lived. Forty feet above the water, it had an opening about four feet high, and it ran back in about sixty feet, and in front of it there was a shelf of sticky clay a hundred feet across. The bears slunk into the cave and disappeared.

Anton and I hallooed at the top of our lungs, and after a while several native men responded and crawled up to the opening of the cave, and one of them agreed to stay and watch, and all through the night he stuck bravely to his post.

When I returned next morning, he said to me, "There are three bears and a hyena in this cave, sahib." Just then I happened to glance up, and there, at the crest of the hill, stood a huge bear, motionless, as if posing for his picture, looking down at us. But before I could get ready to fire, he bounded away at top speed.

Though we scrambled up the clayey slope, saw which way he had gone, and pursued for half a mile, he escaped.

Much disgusted, we went back to the cave and began examining its surroundings, and found evidences that it had been an abode of tigers, leopards, wildcats and bears in turn—no two kinds could live there at the same time. Then, leaving the man to watch, we went about our business, and when we returned in the evening he still insisted that there were three bears inside, but was not so sure about the hyena.

I had a pretty laborious day of it in the village and was unable to revisit the cave until dusk; then Anton and I went and perched on rocks, with rifles ready, close to the entrance, waiting for darkness and hunger to bring out the bears. We could hear the croaking of muggers—the great crocodiles of India—in the river. As night descended, there came vague sounds of beasts of prey roaming at large in the jungle. Over the hilltop rose a dullish red moon that turned slowly to orange and then yellow, and poured a flood of mellow radiance down the slope.

The tenants of that cave knew we were there.

We knew they knew. Beyond question they must have scented us. And, while it was perhaps foolish to suppose that bears' minds work like men's minds, I could not help fancying that the beasts inside had figured out a plan and had rehearsed it, mentally, a hundred times over. To test the truth of this, one would have to be a bear; yet the event seemed to show that I was right, for now, to my surprise, forth ambled not one whoofing bear, but three!

Because I was surprised at such incredibly good luck, I hesitated, and stared in open-mouthed wonder; and, quick as a flash, all three of them turned and went bounding up the hillside, a great she-bear leading.

I fired. Down dropped the leader, roaring horribly, biting everything within reach, and flopping over and over, limp and helpless, down the bank all the way to the water's edge—with a bullet through her head. The next bear got a shot in the neck and followed, roaring horribly, but dead in a few seconds. The third, a full-grown male bear, changed his plans at this, and galloped back toward the cave. With my rifle at my hip, the way folks would shoot rabbits in

Ohio when I was a boy, I bored him through, but he crawled on into the cave, badly wounded.

It would not do to leave him there; he might get well, in course of time, and renew his depredations; so, with help from Anton and the native who had kept watch, I got a lot of brush to fill the side of the cave, and soon we had it blazing, and I shielded my eyes with my hand and peered in. Although it was a crooked cave, I could see far enough into it to make out the cowering form of the beast I had wounded. I was in the act of taking aim at his head so as not to spoil his coat, when there was suddenly a wild commotion, and, maddened by the smoke, out bounced a monstrous she-bear, her eyes as red as blood. When she passed the burning brush, her fur caught on fire. Up she went on hind legs and came at me with merciless paw lifted high—to tear my face off.

Transfixed with horror, I fell back, lost my footing in the slippery clay, and started to slide down the bank, rifle in hand, with that flaming beast towering over me. My rifle pointed straight up. It was loaded. My finger was on the trigger. But pull? The sensation of slip-

ping—let alone fear—simply paralyzed my brain, and pull I could not.

Then it was that Anton, who “would never leave me day or night,” made good superbly. He had been holding the now empty rifle I had used before. Tossing it away, he threw himself on the ground between me and that blazing bear, caught hold of me to prevent my slipping further, and cried out, “Shoot, sahib! Shoot!”

I was not conscious of any act of will, but, instantly, I felt my finger pull, and heard the shot, and felt the kick, and caught a mixed odor of gunpowder and burning fur, and dared to look up as I toppled over, scared half dead! With throat torn open, the bear leaped sideways and went bounding up the hill like a living bonfire gone crazy.

I was myself again in a twinkling, and dashed uphill with Anton after the bear. Just then the moon ducked behind a cloud. It made the living bonfire brighter, but fur burns only a short while and by the time we reached the top of the hill no bear was to be seen.

So back we went to the cave. Though the fire within its entrance still blazed, all was quiet there

now, and we judged that the wounded bear inside must have died of his wounds. As for the hyena—my congratulations to that lucky beast for having existed only in the imagination of the native who kept watch! When we let the fire die down and explored the cave with torches, all we found was a bear, and a dead bear at that. We hung him on a tree with the others and went home.

Next morning we returned and searched the hilltop and there, wrapped in a singed coat no longer furry, lay a dead bear. We were glad we had not got too near her when she was dying; in her agony she had chewed bushes, gnawed rocks, torn up the earth, and made a frightful struggle as her lungs gradually filled with blood from her shattered windpipe.

We skinned the four bears, stretched the skins on the ground, covered them with salt and ashes, and let them dry, while the natives swarmed in from far and near for a grand feast that is evidently not forgotten, as I received a letter the other day from the "chaudhri," or headman of the village: "Dear Sahib:—There are four more

bears in the cave and they chase our families. Do come back and shoot them!"

Ever since that message reached me, my trigger finger has been itching.



III: *Dahli the Manganese Slave*

III

Dahli the Manganese Slave

DAHLI, a ten-year-old Hindu boy, drudged in captivity at a manganese mine a long way off from the jungle where "Buffalo Bill," also ten years old, ran wild among the stupid, slatish-blue buffaloes.

Dahli had never heard of Buffalo Bill, nor had Buffalo Bill heard of Dahli; yet amazing things happened, as you shall see, and it was Dahli's courage that turned Buffalo Bill's young life completely upside down. Not at first, however. It took time. And at the stage when I got into the row I was as unaware of Dahli's existence as of Buffalo Bill's.

In those days I lived in Nagpur, the cobra city, and one afternoon I happened to be pacing up and down our garden, thinking over the many problems a missionary always has on his mind, when, chancing to look up, I saw off yonder in

the road a wretched family group—a mother, two little girls, a babe in arms, and a son about eighteen years old—their plaintive brown faces appearing above our garden wall and their hands outstretched in agonized supplication.

“Beggars!” I thought at first. But in India the beggars whine a droning cry of “Pisa, sahib! Pisa, sahib!” and these natives just stood there, silent, with woebegone faces and with arms stretched out toward me, entreating.

“What is it all about?” I wondered. “And where is the father?” I soon learned. Running to the garden wall and looking over, I beheld a miserable native crawling on hands and feet with his face to the sky, and his legs were swollen to twice their natural size.

“Poisoning!” cried the eighteen-year-old boy. “*Kali putr!*”

Now, “*Kali putr*” means “blackstone,” which means manganese, a very poisonous ore, and, as the nearest manganese mine was twenty-eight miles away, I exclaimed, “Is it possible that you have walked all the way here?”

Pointing a melancholy finger at the poor fel-

low on the ground, he said, "Walked and crawled."

I had no suspicion then that these people knew Dahli. I had never heard of Dahli, myself. But in any case, it was no time for questions about anything. I called my wife and had her take the woman and little children to the women's quarters, and ordered my cart got ready, and as soon as it came, gently lifted the manganese victim into it and hurried him to the hospital, carrying along his son. There I arranged to have the boy boarded while his father was being nursed back to health, and it was from the boy that I got the story.

"We are high caste—Kumbhis," he said, "and we lived on our farms near Khandala" (in the neighborhood where Dahli once lived, if I had known) "and the crops failed, and we were suddenly very poor, and then came Mehmet Ali, the Mohammedan, and he besought us to go away with him and work in his manganese mine, and, foolishly, two hundred families of us went—a thousand people in all.

"Mehmet Ali promised us big wages and agreed to pay our fare on the train and provide

us with food for the journey. He kept his word about buying our tickets and furnishing the food, but when we reached the mine he hustled us inside a high stockade of bamboo, with armed guards at all the gates. We were trapped, sahib. Prisoners! Slaves! There he worked us fourteen hours a day and fed us rotten rice and made us sleep out under the stars, and we got no pay at all, as he said we owed him for our railway tickets and food.

“Farmers are not good at handling poisonous ore. Every little while, someone would get a bad cut, and the wound would fester, and a hideous swelling would come. That is what happened to my father. There was no physician at the mine, sahib, and you know it doesn’t pay to keep people who can’t work any more; so Mehmet Ali ordered my father turned loose and the rest of our family along with him. Twenty-eight miles we went, walking and crawling, in the direction of home, and when we came near Nagpur a native Christian said, ‘Go to the Methodist missionary, and he will help you.’”

Among those sweating slaves at the mine was Dahli—the finest, pluckiest brown urchin you

can fancy—and if I had known it I suppose I should have been even crazier to liberate Mehmet's dupes than I was, though I burned with just that desire already, and had the law on my side as I well realized. Long ago, the English took the stand that there must be no slavery, serfdom, or peonage under the British flag anywhere on earth.

But before going to the mine I should have to drum up funds, as I foresaw that Mehmet would never turn his minions loose without compensation. Accordingly I went tearing around among my jolly English friends after promises of money, for in those days all our missions felt poor. But wherever I told about Mehmet Ali and his slaves, Englishmen laughed uproariously, and said I must be crazy with the heat, and denied that any such scandalous abuses could exist in India.

"I like your spirit," I replied, "but now look here, gentlemen, I'm going anyhow—slaves or no slaves—and if I find the story is true and spend money getting those folks out, are you prepared to be good sports and foot the bill?"

They laughed again, and said they most as-

suredly were, and I took their word for it, and began my preparations for the start.

They were a trifle elaborate, for I said to myself, "If I go as a mere civilian, Mehmet Ali won't be much impressed; I must take along my uniform. Surely, he'll respect that." For, although an American, I was a chaplain in the British Army, and I assumed that Mehmet would know that my chaplain's rig denoted the rank of captain. Moreover, I thought best to take a tent, and to camp within sight of Mehmet Ali's house and let it appear that I had come with the intention of staying there until he saw fit to do as I ordered. And, by the way, "putting on dog," as the English say, I resolved to take with me a servant.

So I called Anton, the splendid, stalwart, fearless young Hindu who had been brought up by one of our missionaries in Southeast India where there are many Portuguese (hence the Portuguese names he bore) and who was now my devoted servant and Man Friday, and, whenever I went out adventuring in the jungle, my cook.

"Anton," said I, "how would you like to help

liberate a thousand slaves? There are armed guards in the way, and the Mohammedan slave driver is by all accounts a pretty hot proposition. Understand me; I'm not asking you to go, but if——"

"Sahib!" he interrupted eagerly, "you know I'll go," and that night we started.

We always prefer to travel at night in India when a trip has to be made by bullock cart. It is far easier on the bullocks—and on us. We escape the terrible daytime heat, and, once we get used to it, we can sleep fairly soundly in our carts.

I wonder what Dahli thought, next day, when we arrived and pitched our tent in a grove of magnificent palm trees on a knoll overlooking the mine. From somewhere inside the great stockade of bamboo he must have seen us. But I remember only too well what I myself thought. As I looked down from the knoll and watched the thousand busy laborers getting out manganese, with guards armed to the teeth pacing to and fro before the gates, I growled, "Now, isn't this a situation? One Yankee—one—count him—trying to upset all that!"

At another time and in another mood, I might have found the scene very interesting, for manganese is one of India's greatest resources, and the Steel Corporation must have manganese or quit making armor plate for the world's navies, and I remember a queer, close-mouthed young Englishman who had turned up near Ramtek several years before and begun wandering over the hills and breaking stones with a little hammer, as he was a geologist and analytical chemist.

Climbing a barren hill one day, he sat down at the top, broke off a piece of jutting rock, felt its weight, hammered it into tiny bits, gazed at the bits long and earnestly, and, springing up in a fever of wild excitement, fairly flung himself down that hill and vanished without breathing a word to anyone. Next day he was at the government office taking out prospecting, mining and land licenses, for he had discovered the solid mountain of manganese that has since made his fortune and not only his but those of his friends. Talk about your Wall Street brokers! See what India can do.

But I was not concerned about manganese just now. I was looking over the ground with



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a view to action. I could see a rather pretentious house, as houses go in India, and took it to be Mehmet's, as it stood close to the principal gate in the stockade; and off to the right I saw a native village—council trees, temple, and rows of native huts—and heard the yapping of half-starved village dogs. One likes to have a village near at hand. It is a source of supplies and may turn out to be a mighty convenient haven of refuge.

As soon as we had got things into good working order in our camp, I put on my khaki uniform and, taking Anton with me—for style rather than for utility—went and paid my respects to Mehmet Ali.

In his oily, hypocritical way the old Moham-medan was a model of cordiality—at first. But, the instant I approached the subject of labor conditions at the mine, all his polished manners deserted him. While he refrained from calling me “a dog of a Christian,” his wicked little eyes said that and more, and he snarled contemptuously out of his great beard, “Who are you, to come nosing into other people's affairs like this?

Out with you! Go! I know that uniform—it's only a chaplain's."

But here Anton showed there was utility in him, as well as style. "*Khabardar!*" he cried. "You'd better look out!" adding, "It's a chaplain's uniform, yes, but the man who wears it is a Captain Sahib, in the British army."

"Ten thousand pardons, sahib!" exclaimed Mehmet. Then, salaaming reverentially, "I am at your service!"

"In that case," said I; "you will turn loose your slaves."

"Slaves, sahib? Slaves? There are no slaves here. What do you mean, sahib?"

I told him that every man, woman and child at work in that mine must go free.

"But—but," he protested, clutching nervously at his robes, "they are in debt to me up to their ears. They owe three thousand rupees, sahib. Three thousand rupees for railway tickets and food!"

"Prove it! Get out your books!" said I.

Though boiling with secret indignation, he hobbled away and got his big ledger, and we looked into it, and, while we found nothing to

substantiate his story, found nothing that contradicted it out and out. "Mehmet Ali," I said at length, "your bookkeeping is enough to make one's head swim. Suppose I go to the government office and hunt up your income tax report and see what statement you made of sums owing you."

At that, he wilted. "Come, now!" I demanded. "Deducting their pay for the time they have been here, how much do these people really owe you?"

He answered, "Five hundred rupees, sahib"—in American money about a hundred and seventy-five dollars.

Whipping out my check book, I wrote a check for the amount, threw it on the ground at Mehmet's feet, and cried, "There you are! Take it! And I've more to say. All these slaves of yours must be turned loose by five o'clock this afternoon, or you'll suffer for it!"

Having gone my full length of good American bluff, I turned on my heel and left him, and back we went to our camp, where I paced up and down in front of my tent for quite a while thinking hard. Then I stepped inside and loaded my shot-

gun, and presently I heard Anton call, "Sahib! come quickly!"

I sprang to the door of the tent and saw Anton pointing a brown finger toward a gate in the stockade. "Look!" he said. "A small boy has just come out."

This was my first glimpse of Dahli. "Fine!" I said. "We can make use of that boy! Let's coax him up here." As the road from the gate led past our camp, this looked easy, and when the boy came near, I called and he gingerly approached.

"Where are you going, lad?" I asked.

"To the village—on an errand for one of the guards."

I laid a hand on each of his bony young shoulders, and said, "Pay close attention, for what I am going to tell you is very important. I am a chaplain in the British army, and that means that I am a captain."

"Yes, sahib."

"And I have paid every rupee you folks owe Mehmet and ordered you all set free by five o'clock this afternoon. But the whole thing may still depend on you, my boy. You look like a

fine, brave youngster, and I believe you are. Will you risk your life to give those poor slaves freedom?"

"Yes, sahib. What must I do?"

I took out a box of matches and put it into Dahli's hand. "Perhaps nothing, but perhaps you will have to set fire to a house. If Mehmet fails to turn you all loose at five o'clock, wait an hour, and then if he hasn't done it, set fire to a house at the far end of the enclosure. All the guards will rush out to the fire. That's your chance to make a break for liberty, the entire thousand of you."

"Yes, sahib."

"But there'll be a lot to do between now and six o'clock. You must whisper the news around among the people and make sure they all understand. Tell them to come to me and that I will protect them and be their friend forever."

"Yes, sahib"—and away he trotted on his errand. Pretty soon we saw him returning from the village, and he waved his hand at me as he passed near our camp and I felt sure that Dahli would make good.

I believe I took down my shotgun and ex-

amined it at least forty-seven times that afternoon as I waited, waited, for five o'clock to come. It seemed as if five o'clock never would come. And all the while we could see the swarms of Hindu men, women, and children toiling wretchedly at the mine, but, as all brown youngsters look alike that far off, we could not distinguish Dahli. How was he acquitting himself? we wondered. Had he spread the news? If he had, were the people ready to trust me? If they were, and had the grit to defy Ali if he failed to release them at the appointed hour, would their dash for liberty succeed? But the great point, after all, was the question of Dahli's courage. Suppose that, at the last moment, Dahli should lose heart and be afraid to set fire to the house.

One—two—three—four—five! tolled the village bell.

We strained our eyes watching—and our ears listening—for some evidence that Mehmet Ali intended to obey me. There was no such evidence. Not a change anywhere. No stopping of work. No orders given to stop. No unusual movement—or lack of movement. At the gates,

armed guards pacing steadily to and fro just as before.

During the next hour I raged up and down in front of my tent, fuming and storming and sorely tempted to take my loaded shotgun and go straight to Mehmet and—well, nudge him.

At last—oh, at last!—the village bell rang out. We counted strokes. One! Two! Three! Four! Five! *Six!* And now—hurrah for Dahli!—we heard a boy's shrill voice cry, "*Agg! Agg! Agg!*"—"Fire! Fire! Fire!"—and a curl of whitish smoke oozed out from the door of a house at the far end of the enclosure, and up its grass roof streaked flames, and instantly the whole place was in commotion as the guards rushed headlong to put out the fire.

Then I saw what Moses saw—an exodus! Out through the gates poured a thousand woebe-gone people. In a cloud of yellow dust they came, with children and goats and dogs and bedding and all they possessed. They swarmed around me rejoicing. Loaded shotgun in hand, I waited for the old Mohammedan and his gang to come out, but, even after they had extin-

guished the blaze, they failed to show up, and a few days later my check was cashed.

In my bullock cart that night I headed a weird procession as we started away—the whole mob of us—for Nagpur city. And of course you know what I was planning. Thanks to Dahli, I had been able to free these poor wretches from Mehmets Ali. It remained to free them from heathenism and make them over into good Christians. This was not difficult, and among our converts was the boy who had set fire to the house. Because of the way he had stood by me when I played the part of Moses, I renamed him Aaron.

But what has all this to do with Buffalo Bill? Everything. Wild and free and savage he was—then. Wild and free and savage he would have continued, no doubt, had not Dahli made me responsible for a thousand rescued slaves. I had to provide for them somehow, and the place I chose for their abode was a tract of land near the jungle where Bill consorted with the stupid, slatish-blue buffaloes.

It had once been the site of a village, and ten thousand high-caste Hindus had lived there, but the cholera came and every living creature per-

ished, even the dogs and cats, and then began the inevitable process—going back to jungle. Decay set in. Big trees grew up through walls and crumbling temples. The village was in ruins—houses wrecked, walls caved in, and the whole place a tangle of wild undergrowth. Then along came the land department people, who cut down the trees for lumber and made ready to sell off the land. We bought enough of it for our thousand liberated slaves and settled them there on farms, and they agreed to give us a quarter of their produce annually for four years, after which the land would be theirs.

I was down there one fall, gathering in the mission's share of the produce—cotton and wheat by the carload and a herd of goats and calves, and great quantities of clarified butter (ghee, they call it)—and we were about ready to start home when I chanced to look across the fields, and, away off toward the jungle, saw a herd of tame buffaloes. Sitting on the back of one of the huge, smooth, gray-blue beasts, and swinging a club, was a naked Hindu boy about ten years old.

I said to the natives around me, "*Dekho Kon-*

ache por tathe ahe?”—“Whose boy is that over there?”

In a remarkably unconcerned sort of way they answered, “Nobody knows.”

“But hasn’t he any folks?”

“All dead, sir. He belongs to nobody, and lives out there with the buffaloes.”

I said, “I want that boy. He must go to school.”

They grinned and nudged one another in the ribs as they replied, “Sahib, you will have to catch him first.”

This reminded me of an old adage of my old Scotch grandmother—“To make hare potpie: First get a hare”—but I made up my mind right then that that lad’s career as a wild boy in the jungle was to come to an end mighty soon. How my heart went out to him! I had a boy of my own safe at home, and realized what it would mean if he were living with only beasts for comrades.

I had been a star sprinter in college, and here was a chance to see how much speed I had in me. I gave my khaki hunting coat to my cook to hold, kicked off my hunting boots, threw down

my pith helmet, and started for the boy. He soon caught sight of something yellow and lively bounding toward him, and, after a long, keen, searching look, slid down from the buffalo's back, looked again to make sure that I was headed his way, saw that I was, and cut for the woods, striking the ground every eight feet and glancing over his shoulder much too often, as he lost speed by it.

But he led me a corking chase despite that. He was all bones and no clothes; I was all bones, but I gained on him only with the greatest difficulty. When he saw I was gaining, he gave a wild yell and turned sharply to the left and ran toward a river. This brought a harvested field of Kaffir corn between us, and the stubble made bad going—for me—but I cut across it, sprinting as I had not sprinted in years. There was now only a slight distance to gain. It shortened. It shortened still more. He doubled back. I leaped headlong, and tackled him squarely.

I have tried to catch a greased pig at a county fair and I have played football some, but that boy was the slipperiest proposition I ever had hold of. He kicked, squirmed, scratched and

bit, but I tucked his arms behind him, jiu-jitsu fashion, and I marched him toward the cheering crowd, while he kicked back at me every few steps.

We put some clothes on him—the first he had worn since nobody knows when—and, because of the circumstances of his capture, I named him Buffalo Bill. I thought the next thing to do was to give him a job; so I set him astride a buffalo cow and told him to ride behind and drive the herd back to the mission station. All the way he boo-hooed, and tried to get the sympathy of passers-by, but when they asked what we were doing with the boy, I said to them, “Leave him alone!”

We reached home in a few days, and, after a scrub and a shearing, Buffalo Bill was put into school. He moped around for a while and made no friends until he began to get his bearings, and then he suddenly cheered up and copied the other boys with astonishing success, and got to be a regular favorite—popular, actually. He studied hard to make up for lost time, and took a huge interest in athletics.

Except as we missionaries introduce them, na-

tive India has no sports. There are only two sorts of native men—the toilers and the thinkers. If they toil, they can't be thinkers. If they are thinkers they must have delicate hands and small muscles, with no sign of labor about them anywhere. I had to inculcate other ideals. I taught our boys to “eat air,” as they called taking exercise, and become fine, big-chested, hard-muscled runners and jumpers. Buffalo Bill won three prizes for scholarship, but he grew strong and athletic and let his inky black hair get long like a football player's, and there was fire in his dark eyes, and he feared nothing on earth. One day the chief commissioner gave Bill a medal for running, and it was my duty to pin it on the boy's shirt. As I did so, I said to the commissioner, “I have a good mind to keep this, for I can beat him running.”

You can guess what became of Buffalo Bill. When a boy has been saved from wild barbarism and brought up in a splendid school, and, arriving at young manhood, sees a world of degraded heathen folks eking out a miserable existence all around him in poverty and utter ignorance and benightedness, he wants to turn in and help them.

Buffalo Bill came to me one night and said, "*Upidash pahije*"—"I've decided to preach."

That suited me right down to the ground, but there was one obstacle—his name. Who ever heard of a Reverend Buffalo Bill? So I changed it to William. But he keeps his football hair.

IV: *Boys of the India Jungle*



IV

Boys of the India Jungle

COBRAS—the big, black, hooded cobras of India—are the deadliest snakes known, and for eight years I lived in Nagpur, the city of cobras, where Hindus worship them as gods. All the principal roads leading into Nagpur have wayside shrines enclosing sham cobras twisted about sham torches and splattered with red paint and decked out with flowers, and upon every snaky idol the natives throw rice and sweetmeats and clarified butter. However, it is not only in Nagpur that cobra worship thrives. You see plenty of it elsewhere—for instance, at Woomrauti.

One day I visited a family of weavers at Woomrauti and found them weaving a long strip of cloth in an alleyway, and a small boy was putting the red dye on the threads with a brush. I wanted that boy for our mission school, but his

father said, "There'd be no profit in that for me. He puts color on the cloths." Still, I had some hope of persuading the man and so, in order to gain his confidence and good will, I went into the house with him and we squatted crosslegged on the smooth dirt floor.

While telling him about our school and the great things it could do for native boys, I chanced to notice close to me a hole where a bamboo driven into the ground had rotted away. It piqued my curiosity, so I asked, a trifle nervously, "*Yih chuna ache gihr?*"—"Is that a rat hole?"

"*Ne, sahib, wuh sampache garh,*" replied the native—"No, sir, it's a snake hole." He said this as calmly as you might mention a tank for goldfish. His impassive brown face betrayed no anxiety. His dark eyes never changed their expression. Yet there, right in his very house, dwelt the "hooded death."

I wiggled away from the hole, and we went on talking, but I watched that hole intently and after a little while I saw a cobra's mouse-like head stealthily emerge from it and then pop back in.

I whipped out my revolver, but the native lifted both hands in vehement protest, and his dark eyes flamed, as he cried excitedly, "*Kubhe ne, sahib!*"—"Never do that, sir!"

I pulled myself together, tucked away the pistol, and said in the calmest tone I could manage, "How long has the snake been here?"

"A long time, sir."

"Why on earth don't you kill it?"

For answer he solemnly went and got a little red earthen dish, poured some goat's milk into it from a coconut shell, set it on the floor, and pushed it over toward the snake hole with a stick. Immediately the head and dreadful hood came up through the hole, and a bar of light from the open door fell glistening on the cobra's scales. I watched, fascinated. Five feet long and big around as my wrist, the deadly serpent emerged, and began to suck up the milk. The man shut his eyes and began to pray to the snake, and when it had gone back into its hole, I said, "Doesn't it sometimes do mischief?"

In a shuddering sort of way, but not with any trace of deep resentment, the man replied, "Sir, my little niece lay asleep on this very floor one

night, and next morning we found her cold and dead, with the marks of snake fangs in her wrist."

"Let me kill it!" I begged.

He would listen to no such thing. "Don't, *sahib!*" he cried. "Perhaps it is my dead father, who has been born again as a cobra because he sinned when he was a man," said my host; "and perhaps it was because of my niece's sins that the cobra was ordered to bite her. Who am I, sir, to fight against the gods?"

All my efforts to talk him out of his belief failed utterly, and I failed to get the boy, which cut me to the quick. Missionaries in India become used to seeing grown-ups play fast and loose with the "hooded death," and come to look upon cobra worship as little worse than other forms of heathenism—smallpox worship, for example—but when we see boys' lives endangered by it we are furious. I had an orphanage full of splendid, brown-skinned youngsters all pep and jollity and brightness, and how I did want that boy I failed to get! Think what we might have made of him. Several of our finest native Christians came up out of surroundings

even more shocking than his. You remember Gani, the wild boy, and "Buffalo Bill," another wild boy, and there have been many more, among them a lad we named Titus.

Up in the Gond Hills, one night, we had a big fire roaring and crackling to keep off wild beasts and make the jungle seem a little home-like, and the men were lying around—in more ways than one—when suddenly two horrified natives rushed up, dragging a fifteen-year-old boy who had been hurt.

"*Dawai paije!*"—"We want medicine!"—they cried breathlessly. They told us a tiger had attacked a cow, and the boy had gone after him single-handed, armed only with a kind of tomahawk, and hacked him so viciously that the tiger fled to a low tree and scrambled up into a fork about four feet from the ground. Even then the boy chopped at his legs and shouted for help until the villagers came and dispatched the beast with their axes. In the fight the tiger had reached out and mauled the boy's arm from shoulder to elbow. It was all in tatters and bleeding profusely.

I knew that if the tiger had been eating carrion

recently, its claws must have been filthy, and blood poisoning might set in; so I washed out the gashes with antiseptics and bandaged the arm. The boy never winced under the treatment, even when I knew it was torture to him, and he told of hair-raising encounters he had had with snakes and wild beasts, relating his experiences as coolly as if such things were an everyday affair the world over.

"Here's a boy worth saving," I said to myself. I explained about our schools and how we make teachers and smart men out of jungle lads, and asked him to go away with me and get to be somebody, and he consented. We saved his arm, and, although once or twice he ran away, we made a splendid man of Titus.

And now about Gholi. I had been spending a few days at Godarwadi in the Central Provinces and, before leaving, went to talk things over for the last time with Dahli Das, a native worker there. He said to me, "Come! There is something I want to show you."

"All right," said I. "Lead the way."

He took me through the town and on toward a river bank; there we came to what had once

been a beautiful garden. We entered a broken-down gate, passed through an avenue of palms, and before us in the center of the garden found a square well with the water twenty feet below the ground and reached by steps of red sandstone. Above the well, stone elephants' heads reached out from four directions, the tips of their trunks touching. Next the water a dozen carved heads trimmed a coping. The walls and steps were moss covered, showing that they had not been in use for many a day. Grass sprouted from the crevices. Two of the elephants' trunks had broken off. All was now ruin and decay and a dank, green scum covered the pool.

I could not help wishing myself back in the days when lotus blossoms floated on that pool and when up and down those carven steps went dainty Hindu girls to bring water to a noble dwelling in the garden—a dwelling of which not one vestige now remained. I imagined the time when richly attired Hindu women sat among flowers and birds beneath the moon, with a tame leopard to guard them, or perhaps a tiger held in leash by a tall, swarthy slave, while with native music they beguiled the lovely Eastern night.

At the foot of the garden, toward the river and outlined against the sky, I saw a group of old temples, their walls cracked and broken with neglect and decay and by storms of scores of years. As we approached them, I wondered what it was that Dahli Das had been so anxious to show me, but I was not long kept waiting, for, in answer to his musical cry of "*Koi hai?*"—"Is anyone there?"—the seemingly deserted temples appeared to awaken, and out from them poured the saddest throng of people I had ever looked upon and the most terrifying. They were lepers!

Yes, the garden that had once been so beautiful was now an abode of the living dead. No more flowers. No more birds. No more loveliness. Instead, only rags, poverty, contagious disease, and misery. And among them I saw several children playing—untainted as yet.

Dahli Das gathered the lepers together at the foot of the temple steps, and, even though we were careful not to get very near them, I shuddered, not alone from fear of contracting the disease, but from pity when I saw them raise now a fingerless hand, now a stump of an arm, as they talked in husky leper voices.

Yet amid it all there was something beautiful and bright, for they were Christians, and while their poor bodies were passing away they looked forward to the life beyond death.

I secured one of the little lads—a fine, plump, curly-haired youngster they called Gholi, which means “little ball.” But we had a heartbreaking scene before they let me take him away. Both his parents had been lepers; both were now dead; and yet, although I explained that no one is born a leper and that the boy was still free from taint, but that if he remained there he was almost sure to become diseased like the others, they wept and wailed.

We named him Paulus, and he has grown up to be a splendid man, and has married a high-caste girl. They have two of the sweetest little children I ever saw.

In India, where calamities abound, the worst, perhaps, is famine, and it was during a great famine that we found a boy we re-christened Luke. Village after village was being completely wiped out, and one day in villages far apart two pitiful little bundles of bones were laid at the roadside in hope that our mission cart

would come rumbling along and save them—a baby boy and a baby girl. The mission cart arrived in time, and took the waifs to the mission station, where they grew and became strong. We found a lady whose baby boy had died—a little fellow named Benjamin—and she paid for the upbringing and education of the tiny Hindu lad and gave him her dead child's name; but, as there were other Benjamins in our missions and she wanted no mistake made, she added Luke; so Benjamin Luke he became and we knew him generally as Luke. We called the girl Miriam. Several years ago, when they had reached manhood and womanhood, Luke and Miriam were married in the mission church with wedding veil, orange blossoms and all. There are now seven chapters to Luke.

Did I say that famine was the worst of calamities in India? I take that back. The worst calamity is Hinduism, and not so much because of what Hinduism is as because of the atrocious things it compels the natives to do. For example, it can bring to pass a scene like the one that threw Shadrach into our hands. An awful scene! Monstrous!

On an ash heap outside a native village four dogs were waiting to eat a tiny Hindu boy, and no one cared. He was ill. His mother had wearied of his crying all the time, and had taken him to the priest, who said, "Put him out to die; the devil is in his stomach." So there he was. And there were the dogs—waiting.

I didn't know it. With a string of lumbering bullock carts, I was a long way off in the jungle with no intention whatever of pulling up for the night at that particular village. But some vague unreasoning impulse got hold of me, and, without any discernible object in it, I cried out to my driver, "*Lowkar jao!*"—"Hurry up!"

He twisted the bullock's tail (that is the way we crank up our "jungle auto," since anyone dealing with a self-starter may find himself dealing with a self-starter that is likely to hook) and we crashed through the forest at the rate of five miles an hour. By sundown we had reached our camping place beneath a magnificent tree fully a hundred feet across. There was a well near-by, and a row of native huts, and an ash heap. On the ash heap sat four mangy, hungry-looking, big, yellow dogs, eyeing something within the cir-

cle they made. Supposing it was a cat they were tormenting, I walked over to the ash pile and kicked at them till they skulked off, with white fangs showing. To my horror I saw that the center of their interest was a tiny naked boy almost dead, his poor, skinny body as gray as the ashes he sat on. He was so sick and starved that he could barely keep upright. His eyes were shut. He had a great sore on his forehead, and his body was hideously puffed out by a swollen spleen, while his arms were about as big around as the handle of a child's broom, and his fingers the size of slate pencils. Vermin swarmed all over him.

I hurriedly gave him a stimulant, and ordered our native cook to prepare some broth, while I clipped the boy's filthy hair, and, after massaging his body with oil, laid him on the straw in the bottom of my cart. Nothing but his pulse—only too feeble at that—showed he was still alive.

After two days' care he opened a pair of big, hollow eyes and gazed at us in terror. I had not beheld such eyes since I fell out of Grandfather's hayloft and saw an owl on a rafter

solemnly taking me in. As for the child's terror, I understood it perfectly. The last sight those eyes had rested on had been the group of hungry curs waiting for him to die.

I smiled at him. I don't believe he remembered anyone's ever smiling at him before. He smiled back and won our hearts completely. I took him to our school, and named him Shadrach because I found him on the ashes. When he got to be a man he became a power among the natives, traveling from village to village and teaching them to cast off Hinduism.

And now comes the story that delights me most of all. Far back in the jungle I came one day to an old, deserted house about forty feet square, with its one door off and its grass roof caved in, and heard boyish voices shouting in chorus, "*Maro! Maro! Maro!*"—"Beat him! Beat him! Beat him!"

I sprang from my cart, and ran and looked in through the open doorway. I saw twenty-two small boys, not one of them more than ten years old, standing in a ring, while on the floor were two boys, one sitting on the other and beat-

ing him in the face. "*Tamba!*" I cried—"Stop that!"

They jumped into the air about a yard, well scared, and looked around for a way of escape, but I blocked the only door, so they looked at one another in mighty comical dismay.

I smiled, and it was a friendly, pitying kind of smile, for they were as forlorn a gang of youngsters as I ever beheld—hungry, dirty, and frightened—and presently a boy back in the crowd said to the other, "Don't be afraid! The sahib has a twinkle in his eye."

Then I said, "Boys, how would you like to have a full stomach three times a day and a nice place to sleep?"

They stared at one another, puzzled and very much astonished, and I went on. "If you'll come with me I'll give you a place to sleep and shoes for your feet and clothes to keep you warm and dry in the rain and three square meals every day."

"*Saccha bat hai?*" said one of them—"Is it true?"

I replied, "*Ishwar saccha hai*"—"Before God, it is true."

For a few moments they held a grand pow-wow among themselves, and at last a boy said to the crowd, "I am ready to go with him." And I walked away toward my cart with two dozen wretched orphans tagging after me, for they had come from villages where smallpox and the plague had wrought terrible havoc among the natives and the boys had run for their lives and had lived together in the ruined temple with only such food as they could find.

All told, I have picked up something like two hundred Hindu boys, and, while I can't say I ever went at it from policy, it has been the best policy conceivable, for, out of the two hundred, quite a number have become native missionaries, and a native missionary has an influence no foreigner can hope to gain. In villages where the people would resent interference by a white man, they gather in great crowds to hear Gani sing, or to listen while "Buffalo Bill," the athlete who was once a wild boy, tells them how they may escape from the abominable oppression of Hinduism, or while Shadrach, the eloquent, tears Hinduism to ribbons. And nothing can equal the superb devotion of these lads. As a native mis-

sionary Benjamin Luke gets a house to live in and it has a garden full of fruit trees, but his salary is a joke. Not long ago an Englishman came along and said, "Luke, what is your salary?"

"Forty-five rupees a month."

"If you will leave this work and take a government job, we will give you a hundred and eighty. Think it over, and let me know your decision."

"You can have my answer now, *sahib*." The Englishman was delighted, as it seemed to him that there could be only one answer, but Luke continued, "Ever since the day when my little wife and I were laid out on the road to starve, the mission people have been our greatest friends. They have fed us, clothed us, educated us and loved us, and I wouldn't leave them now for ten thousand rupees a month."

In the light of all this, you can see how it cuts when I remember the boy I failed to get—the weaver boy at Woomrauti, in whose house lurked the "hooded death," and who, if still alive, is doubtless saying his prayers to a snake. Ankus was the boy's name. It means an ele-

phant goad. What a goad to drive ahead our work he might have made, and indeed may yet make! For we have not done with Ankus by a long shot. Thanks largely to the devotion of Hindu boys we have rescued, we are undermining the caste system and putting democracy in its place and we are substituting for snake worship an enlightened faith. In a word, we are making a new India, where Ankus will meet on every hand the ideas and principles and applied decencies of the good old U. S. A.

V: *Trapped Among Crocodiles*

V

Trapped Among Crocodiles

HUGE, bloodthirsty crocodiles, anywhere from ten to a dozen feet long, swarm in the rivers of South India, and even a river bank is dangerous, for the monsters dig a hole under it and crawl out to bask in the blistering sunshine, or swim close to the shore until some guileless deer or goat—or perhaps a man—approaches the stream. Then, striking a terrible, swift blow with its tail, a crocodile knocks the victim—splash!—into the muddy water, and darts away with him to its lair.

To make matters worse, there are no bridges—none whatever—and when people ask if we have automobiles in India, I tell them, “Yes—fords in all our rivers.” The happy-go-lucky road master, out there, sees no need for bridges, as the seasons are so arranged that except during the Christmas “mango showers” there is abso-

lutely no rainfall. When the rains are on, and brimming rivers alive with man-eating reptiles—oh, well, let sensible folks stay at home.

It is a satisfactory enough rule for Hindus, perhaps, but not for a missionary like myself; rain or shine, drought or flood, we fellows are always on the jump.

Not long ago I was touring the Bastar State with a squad of native Christians in three little two-wheeled bullock carts, and along towards dusk one evening we came to the Pranhita River, a tributary of the sacred Godavari. As usual, there was no bridge, and yet there seemed to be a fair chance of inducing the "*muchis*," or fishermen, to fetch their boats. Boats, did I say? I must beg a decent, self-respecting boat's pardon for the slander. They are nothing more or less than rude logs hollowed out like a horse trough and fastened together in pairs with bamboos and cocoanut rope in such a way as to leave a space of about five feet between. A clumsy deck at bow and stern provides standing room for the boatmen, who pole the craft along. A cart has to be painfully lifted aboard and placed with a wheel in the hollow of each log; then you

back the cart to the middle of your jungle ferry-boat, fix your last thought upon your family, say your prayers, and start off. The bullocks swim behind.

We hallooed at the top of our lungs for *muchis* and kept it up for several minutes, but no *muchis* appeared. Gingerly approaching the bank, we gazed anxiously upstream and down. Not a boat was to be seen. It looked like a clear case of ford it or quit, and nobody wanted to quit, though I may say that a nastier, more, uninviting ford had seldom confronted me. Floating logs, any one of which might overturn a cart, went racing by. Swirling, reddish brown eddies—the Pranhita seemed fully one-eighth mud—showed where drifted rocks lay strewn along the bottom.

As we stood there, hesitating—or rather, considering—one of my men pointed significantly at certain marks in the mire at his feet. “Crocodile tracks, sahib,” said he, and, sure enough, there were tracks in profusion—footprints of savage reptiles that had but lately slunk away into the water. We saw tail marks, too, and hollows where the big beasts had lain all day in the

sun; and there was evidence that a ferocious pair had been battling—deep holes, with mire and blood mixed, told the story.

I was strongly tempted to pitch our tents right where we were and postpone the crossing till daybreak, for already the light had begun to fail. But time was precious, and I realized that it would be slow work rigging our carts for the trip across and slow work crossing; better have it over with at once, and camp on the other side, as we could then count on resuming our journey before sunrise. Nobody likes to ford an angry stream in the dusk, especially where crocodiles abound, yet business is business, so I put the matter up to my men. "We are not afraid, sahib," said they. "Let's risk it—the sooner, the better," and just then a turbaned native came trotting to the river bank. I thought, "Excellent! He'll know about *muchis*," and—alas, he did; the bubonic plague was raging in the neighborhood, it seemed, and the *muchis* had run for their lives.

Naturally, this increased our desire to hurry onward, but the stranger had a bad opinion of the ford and unbosomed himself about it in a

style I found distinctly unpleasant. "Only a week ago," said he, "three natives were fording the Pranhita at this very place, when one of them—a woman, sahib—suddenly gave a shrill, piercing cry and threw up her arms and disappeared. Not a trace of her has been seen, for you know the ways of the crocodile, it eats everything—clothes, bangles, earrings, toe rings, and all."

In pure fun I said to the man, "I'll give you a rupee" (thirty-three cents, or about three days' pay for ordinary labor) "if you will walk across that ford, watch for holes and rocks, and see if we can get over with our carts."

I never expected him to take me up, though the natives are a great deal less afraid of crocodiles than they ought to be, and sometimes run awful risks hunting them. The usual way is to get a huge chunk of meat and thrust into it a piece of bamboo sharpened at both ends, and tie a rope to the meat, and on the other end of the rope tie a log, and then throw the bait into the river near the crocodile's lair. The beast swims out, presently, sniffs the meat, and gulps it down whole. Of course, the sharp stick lodges

in his stomach and the creature is fast, and the floating log shows where he is. After a short while, the stick tears his insides, causing hemorrhage, and the water turns crimson, and in a few hours he is dead and the natives haul in the rope and get him ashore. But a favorite sport in the neighborhood of Cawnpore, Allahabad, and other northern cities, especially those on the Ganges, is shooting crocodiles from boats. For British Civil Service people, this is big fun; for the natives, however, it is often fatal, as their part in the merry game is to dive after a dead crocodile when he sinks to the bottom, and there are live crocodiles lurking about down there, and many a poor native has been seized and never come up.

It has always puzzled me to know why natives will consent to hunt these reptiles, for the crocodile is sacred. Women used to throw their children into the Ganges as offerings to crocodiles, and, although the British have mostly put a stop to it, the thing is occasionally done even now when some half-crazy fakir has worked up the people to a frenzy of hysteria. While I was in India, a native woman was seen going toward the

Ganges; she had an emaciated babe in her arms—weak, puny, and sore-eyed—while in front of her ran a plump little boy of five. When she returned, she still had the sickly babe, and her face shone with a fanatical light. As she neared her village, a missionary met her, and, noticing that she had only one child now, whereas she had started out with two, asked what had become of the little boy. The woman hesitated, then said, slowly, "I gave him to Mother Ganga." Astonished at her words, the missionary exclaimed, "But why did you throw the fine, strong child to the crocodiles and keep the weak one!" She replied, "I don't know what you Americans do, but we Hindus always give the best to the god."

Now, as I say, I was only joking when I offered the turbaned native a rupee to wade across the Pranhita and see if our carts would be safe in fording. Much to my surprise, he said, eagerly, "Sahib, I'll chance it." Still in fun, I called his bluff. Pressing the rupee into his hand, I told him I wished him luck, and, before I could stop the fellow, he hitched up his *dhoti* to his waist, and, with a rascally grin I failed to understand at the time, plunged in.

It is a wonder that he got across at all. The turbulent water reached his waist and now and then almost his shoulders. Floating logs barely missed him. But he made a fine dash of it, from a sporting point of view, though from our own it was an out-and-out swindle, for he took such long, high steps that any number of deep holes and dangerous stones might have been there without his finding them for us, and any number of hungry crocodiles, too. Reaching the opposite bank, he ran nimbly ashore, whisked round, and, salaaming profoundly, called out. "Thank you sahib, for the rupee! I live on this side of the river and was going to wade across anyhow."

Still, my rupee had not been squandered fruitlessly altogether; at least we now knew more or less definitely how deep the Pranhita was at that ford, and could rig our carts accordingly. As near as I could determine, everything put aboard a cart must be slung two feet or more above the floor on horizontal rods of bamboo—quite a job when you come to think of it. Up went rifle, tents, supplies—in short, our entire paraphernalia—while the bullocks rested in as pretty a nook of riverside jungle as you will ever behold.

I remember the superb mango tree, like mounds of living green; and tapering bamboos, creaking and swaying aloft; and jungle lime trees, their branches decked with orchids painted red and blue and pink; and tree trunks laden with ferns and tropical moss and lichens. But I hardly think the bullocks had an eye for the beauty of the scene. They were much too cruelly pestered by the flies that buzzed around them in clouds. Nor was I especially excited about the charms of lovely nature, myself. I kept thinking crocodile—recalling the story of the woman devoured alive out yonder, recalling the sight of tell-tale marks in the mud at the river's brim, and trying, as best I could, to guess where the crocodile lair was. Not far down stream, I concluded, else why should the beasts have congregated in such numbers at this particular point?

When at last all was ready, the first cart, with our least precious possessions aboard, went lurching and splashing in as pilot. High up in the top of my own cart, I stood on two pieces of bamboo and clung to the woven-bamboo roof for

dear life. Then came the third cart, with my tent, boxes, food, and cook.

The men behaved magnificently, and I suppose that I behaved fairly well, myself—that is, in so far as outward conduct went—but oh, the tumult of affrighted misgivings within me! Ashore, I relish a fight with a beast—tiger, black leopard, panther, black bear, any sort of wild creature you choose to name. Afloat, I believe I should rather enjoy whaling. Yet here I was neither ashore nor afloat, and I saw no prospect of a fight—just the grim, hideous chance of getting upset in midstream and falling a prey to the kind of monster that attacks you when you are most helpless and attacks from under cover at that. For, even had not the dusk thickened into something disgustingly like darkness, the Pranhita was so muddy that crocodiles close to its eddying surface would have been practically invisible.

Don't tell me that I was stupid not to be emboldened by having so lately seen a native cross that very ford. The native could hurry; however bloodcurdling his mortal peril, it was soon over with, whereas, in our case, hurrying was

simply out of the question. Tired by a long, hard pull through the jungle, our bullocks made exasperatingly slow progress, and every now and then they would calmly halt and drink, unaware that, at any moment, some voracious, twelve-foot crocodile might catch the scent and come like a flash.

How our carts bumped and tilted as we made our way out into that turbulent river! Slinging the loads so high aboard them had brought up the center of gravity to the danger point, if not beyond it, and, the farther we went, the deeper the water got and the swifter the current. Then, too, the bigger were the loose rocks the Pranhita rolled along its bottom. A dozen times my cart struck stones, heeled over, and, after all but upsetting, somehow righted itself. A dozen times my heart was in my mouth. And now the peril from drifting logs increased appallingly, for, with the quickened current, they rushed past us at redoubled speed. What if one should hit?

As it grew darker, a thing happened that by no means tended to relieve my anxieties; downstream, only a short distance away, the crocodiles

set up a hoarse, reptilian hullabaloo, half croaking, half barking, and whenever the bullocks halted and the rattle and creak of our carts ceased for a moment, we would hear the unamiable chorus. It got on my nerves. It was gruesome—and seemingly unnatural. Familiar as I was with the sound, I had never got reconciled to it. I don't know why, but one expects silence of reptiles or at most nothing louder than the swish of the hooded cobra or its hiss.

We were about halfway across the river, when, all of a sudden, the first cart stopped with a jerk that nearly snapped the bullocks' yoke, and the driver shouted, "*Ek putr ahe, sahib!*"—"There is a great rock, sir!" No mistake, the wheel was nicely "choked" by a stone as big as a bushel basket, directly in the track. The off bullock kept pulling. In the boiling current, the top-heavy cart swung round, with one wheel still blocked, straight toward the crocodiles.

"*Tamba! Tamba!*"—"Stop! Stop!"—yelled the driver, yanking furiously at the rope tied through the bullock's tender nose. Up went the animal's head, and he stopped—just in time.

I sprang into the water—it was up to my arm-



I SPRANG INTO THE WATER, AND PLUNGED HEADLONG
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pits, nearly—and plunged headlong toward the stalled cart, and I remember noticing as I did so that the crocodiles no longer barked and croaked. Had they caught the scent? Were they coming?

It was a mere momentary shudder, for there is something bracing, mentally and morally as well as physically, in a leap into cool water, and something tonic in the struggle to keep one's footing there. I reached the cart. I laid hold of the obstructed wheel. With all my might I lifted. But these bullock carts are clumsy affairs, with solid wooden wheels, made by sawing a tree trunk across, and there was the driver's weight added to that of the cart, and the weight of baggage added to the driver's. Try how I would, I was unable to budge the thing until the restless nigh bullock began pulling, and then up the wheel moved over the stone and down—square on my foot. Wheel and foot sank deep into the mud. The bullock stopped pulling. I was pinned fast, with my back to the crocodiles.

Since then, I have thought of at least half a dozen clever things I might have done, but, even if I had had them clearly in mind at the time, I doubt if I should have done them, the pain was

so excruciating. Instead, I shouted for help.

Instantly there were fine splashes in the water, as three courageous native Christians sprang overboard and rushed to liberate me. Several logs spun by while they were coming, and an object—certainly not a log, for it was going upstream—went past me, close by, leaving a wake of ghastly eddies. A crocodile? I thought so then, and believed my last hour had arrived.

They say that drowning people review in a flash their entire lives, and I fancy the saying is a true one, for I had an experience a trifle resembling it, there in the muddy water with my foot pinned fast and with hungry monsters ready to eat me. A thousand memories crowded upon one another, but only memories of my work in India and of boys I had known there, and the faces of those boys were like the faces of a close-packed multitude filling the whole length and breadth of my consciousness. One face alone—my little son's—was white. And how distinct, how real, the others were! I saw dark-skinned Paulus, and "Buffalo Bill," and Gani, and all the rest—boys taken from among lepers and from among the water buffaloes and from among wild

beasts in the jungle; boys cast off in babyhood by their parents and left to die and rescued just in time; boys picked up in starving villages in the day of famine or saved from villages where cholera or the plague meant death to any who remained there.

It is true that many of them were still boys—in fact, a goodly number were then at the Methodist orphanage school—but even those who had grown to splendid young manhood and were valiantly helping us to fight heathenism in India had childish faces once more. I suppose it was because I had specialized on boys ever since the beginning of my work and developed a huge love for them. Seeing them now, so vividly, gave an added terror to my plight, for it was an awful prospect, this, of having my career cut short before I could know how the majority of those blessed youngsters would turn out. Do you appreciate? We had given them their only chance at liberation from a system of cruel tyranny centuries old—a tyranny that denied them education, doomed them to abject poverty and wretchedness, and forbade them to rise, their sole offense being that they were born into an outcaste

tribe lower than the lowest caste in an order of society where caste is everything. Right in the midst of that atrocious order of society, we had set them free. What now? Would they reward us for all this by making good? Time would tell. How I wanted time—years and years and years of it—to see my boys gain positions of distinction and influence and finally help to overthrow the whole outrageous structure of Hinduism! It is possible that missionaries now working in India will live to behold precisely that. I wanted to be one of them.

It seemed as if an age went by before my men were at my side, lifting the heavy cart wheel off my foot, and turning me loose, but now—hurrah for those splendid native Christians and their pluck! They fairly dragged me through the water, back to my cart, and in I climbed, rejoicing, as our caravan started again.

It is curious how a man's mind will act in an affair like this. While I was up to my neck in muddy water, and pinned fast there, and, as it seemed to me, certain to perish, I reckoned only with the consequences of disaster. But now, when I was once more high, if not dry, in my

cart, I shook with terror, for, instead of seeing the bright, handsome, brown faces of Hindu boys, I saw in imagination the wide-open, sickly-pink mouths of man-eating crocodiles. One confronts peril readily enough at the moment; afterward, it horrifies and unnerves, and you would have laughed if you had seen how, drenched with muddy water though I was, I struggled to keep my place on the bamboo rods that still left an inch or so of space between them and the raging Pranhita. Not by bribe or threat or anything short of brute force could you have made me dip so much as a left toe into that river again.

It is curious, too, that, even in this affrighted mood, I should have fallen to wondering why Hindus call the crocodile a "mugger" and figuring out an explanation that is probably all wrong. I said to myself, "Perhaps they have heard Englishmen or Americans use the vulgar slang word 'mug' for an ugly face, and as the crocodile has an ugly face that reaches a third of the way back to his ugly tail, christened him accordingly"—a reasonable guess, as guesses go, but a guess not by any means calculated to relieve my distress of mind. I hated to think of that "mug."

Armed with innumerable, hideously sharp teeth, it was a horror. To be seized by it and dragged away to one's death beneath the Pranhita—can you conceive of any fate more abominable?

It was getting dark. The jungle along the opposite shore looked dank and blackish, and suggested the presence of wild beasts, which were probably there in considerable numbers, but oh, how I longed to reach it! We were making fair progress. A little more, and the Pranhita would be shallower; then a little more and we should approach terra firma. I grew cheerful. I said to myself, "Buck up, old man! The worst is over."

But what was this? Swarms of flies had tormented our bullocks since the start, yet we had thought little of it, though the bullocks had, and at last one of mine found a nice, simple, convenient way to escape flies—by lying down!—and sank into the stream, with only his nose above water. Round swung my cart, instantly, hit by a floating log and over it tilted and nearly upset, and I knew that presently bullocks, cart, driver, missionary and all would be adrift among the crocodiles.

"Shimpi puckare!"—"Twist his tail!"—I shouted to the driver, for that is how we crank up our jungle flivver, and I confess that I am still unable to understand how the fellow managed to obey my order, though somehow he did—flung himself over in a feat worthy of a star contortionist, grabbed the bullock's tail out of the water, and twisted it furiously.

The stolid brute wiggled his nose a bit, and shook himself, but stubbornly refused to rise and go on. *"Shimpi Kao!"*—"Eat his tail!"—I yelled.

"Eating the tail" is a bullock driver's last resort. It means biting it—rough on the bullock, to be sure, and a remedy no one likes to prescribe, but then, we were saving the animal's life as well as our own, and it was no time for mercy. The driver crooked the bullock's dripping tail in his hands and bit, getting a rich mouthful of Pranhita River as he did so. Then—whoopla! The bullock leaped up and ahead, and, with four angry kicks, made a dash for the shore, dragging his mate with him. The bullocks ahead heard a mighty splashing, and ran. Those behind followed close. It was a race—a regular stampede

—and, all the while, my driver's teeth kept gnawing at that tail, and more and more Pranhita went down his disgusted throat. Tilting, bumping, lurching, our carts at last reached the opposite bank—thanks to ox-tail soup on the run!

We pitched our tents under a great banyan tree, and got a fire going, to keep off wild beasts, and I stood for a long time in front of it, trying to dry my clothes, and, all the while, I could hear the crocodiles in the Pranhita bark and croak. It was rather a cheerful sound now. I wanted to reply, "Too bad, my dears, that we disappointed you! Another evening you may learn how we taste—another evening, but not to-night!"

VI: *Ballia and the Bandit*

VI

Ballia and the Bandit

YOU have all heard thrilling stories and seen pictures of an affair of life and death at the brink of a yawning chasm. But you know that in pictures people don't get hurt—they are only pictures, and so you don't feel very bad.

It was all very real in Ballia's case. He was there, a live Hindu boy. Seven years and more I had known him, and this is how we first got acquainted. Perhaps you remember a story of mine about helping to liberate a thousand captive Hindus who were toiling in misery and without pay at a manganese mine. We settled them on a big industrial farm, you recall, and among them was Ballia, a plucky little fellow who had unlimited good spirits in him despite privation and abuse. He caught my attention at the very

outset. "Look, *sahib*," he said, proudly, "I've had the smallpox," and, sure enough, his jolly brown face was all pock-marked. If there is anything certain to win a missionary's sympathy, it is that; for, as a general rule, it represents one of the most tragical institutions of heathenism—namely, the worship of the smallpox goddess, Devi.

I could readily guess how Ballia had caught the smallpox. It is common in India—as common, almost, as measles and the toothache are here—but heathenism makes the natives do everything in their power to help the disease spread. It is a "sacred" disease—an affliction to be sought after—and the ugly marks it leaves are looked upon as a badge of honor. In Kamtee there is a temple where the smallpox goddess has an image, in front of which you will see tiny vessels filled with smallpox scales brought there as offerings to Devi. While I was serving as a chaplain of the British army (I am as good an American as you are, but every Sunday morning I went and talked to the British Tommies) I used to ride past that temple, and see the smallpox sufferers worshipping there, and swarms of flies

buzzing around them, and blackening the whole front of the filthy old edifice. And whenever smallpox breaks out in a Hindu village, a grand feast is prepared, and all the neighbors are enthusiastically invited in—to catch the disease if they can. It was after a party of that sort that Ballia came down with it, much to his family's delight.

I pitied the boy from the bottom of my heart, and, the more he boasted of his pock-marked face, the deeper my sympathy grew and the stronger my interest, for I said to myself, "When this youngster becomes a Christian and understands what monstrous idiocies heathenism prescribes and enforces, he will want to go out and fight heathenism, tooth and nail." Wasn't that good logic? Heathenism had disfigured him. It had all but cost him his life. It was a curse and an abomination. When Ballia opened his eyes to that hideous fact, then, without fail, there would be a mighty change in Ballia.

I had not long to wait. After a few days, our thousand ex-captives bolted Hinduism in a body and wanted to be Christians, Ballia among them, and he began to realize what a shocking outrage

he had been subjected to. I think it was this, more than any other one thing, that made him want to be a missionary, himself, and induced him to study faithfully in the school we opened at our industrial farm. But Ballia was not brilliant—in fact, he was a dull boy, rather, and, instead of developing the qualities that make a speaker, seemed destined only to become a workman. I was sorry. I had expected much more of him. And yet a Christian workman in India may exert great influence, especially if he has courage. We were soon to learn that our dull, plodding, pock-marked little Ballia had courage in abundance.

During a visit at the big farm (I used to run down there from our Methodist mission station in Nagpur pretty frequently) I heard that a gigantic outlaw—a native six feet five and renowned for thievery and deeds of violence—had been looting our storehouse. One evening Ballia caught him at it. Aware that he was seen, the wretch sprang at Ballia, nabbed him by the throat, threw him down, choked him almost into insensibility, and threatened him with bloody

murder if he ever dared breathe a word to anyone. Poor Ballia crept away half dead.

As soon as he could get to his feet and walk, he came straight to me with the story. Not only that; he accompanied me that night when I called at the nearest police station and turned in a complaint against the bandit who had almost taken his life.

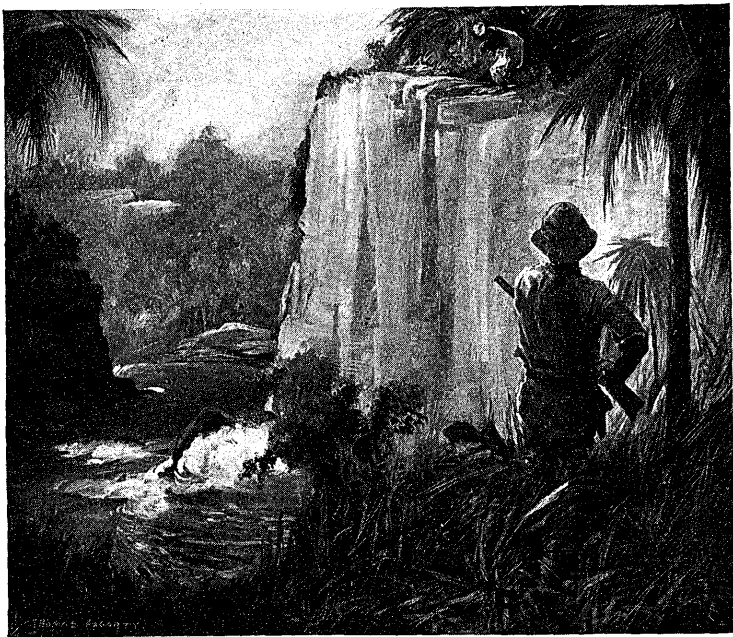
Not long afterwards the bandit was captured (it took several men to arrest him) and dragged before the judge of the Tahsile for trial, and among the witnesses summoned to appear against him was Ballia—indeed, Ballia was the star witness, for, while others of us had circumstantial evidence to offer, he alone had seen the marauder actually committing his depredations.

Ordinarily, a criminal in India has no very overwhelming dread of testimony by natives, but when the native is a Christian the thing becomes serious, for then a judge will believe him. As soon as the burly giant got out on bail (how he secured bail I never knew, yet somehow he managed to) his first care was to hunt up Ballia. He kicked him, beat him, and choked him, trying to make him promise not to tell the court

what he had seen, but Ballia kept saying, "I'm not going to lie for you," and stuck it out to the end, and when we found him he was a terribly mauled boy, bleeding from a dozen wounds.

It was a thoroughly dramatic scene in court that trial—a gigantic brute of an outlaw in the prisoner's dock, a little, pock-marked boy on the witness stand. All during Ballia's examination and cross-examination, the infuriated bandit glared malice and ferocity at him, as much as to say, "Kid, you'll pay for this with your life"—which was literally and exactly what he meant, and if he meant it then he meant it still more when he heard his sentence: Six years in the penitentiary. Before he was put away for the six long years, his brother came to Ballia with a message. The bandit, according to the message, had sworn a great oath to come back, when his term was up, and kill Ballia.

The boy laughed. Six years are a very considerable time. At its termination Ballia might be hard to find, and the criminal dead and gone, and the danger past forever. Besides, in six years Ballia would have got well on toward young man-



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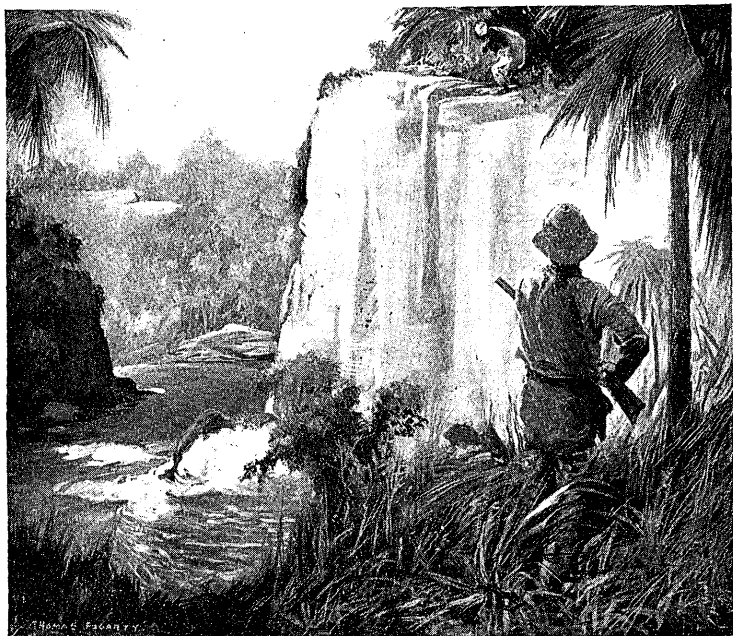


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hood and could perhaps wallop a bandit or so, himself.

After the affair in court, he went back to his studies—with renewed energy and ambition, as it seemed to me—but it is certain that he had a greatly increased influence, for the other boys appreciated his courage and admired it. At his books, however, he was still slow, and we decided at last that further study on Ballia's part would be time wasted. Better put him to work.

So Ballia came to Nagpur and took a job as driver of the mission cart. It was a humble occupation, in a way, but consider. Out went that cart through jungles alive with wild beasts. Only a brave fellow like Ballia could be trusted to drive it. Then, too, driving the cart kept Ballia in contact with the natives and if he lacked the genius to address crowds and win them away from heathenism, he could tackle the natives one by one, and did—frequently with magnificent result.

The long six years went by, and we had almost forgotten about the imprisoned bandit when I set out one day for our industrial farm, taking along Ballia as driver. It is true that we spoke of the

big convict, but our remarks were jocose now, as we had ceased to have any real dread of him, and neither Ballia nor I could recall the exact date of his incarceration. It never occurred to us that, as a matter of grim and ugly fact, the sixth anniversary of that date was close at hand. Nor did anyone at the farm seem to know or care. Interest centered, not in the gigantic criminal soon to be let loose, but in another marauder already at large—an unusually annoying leopard that had taken up headquarters on an island in the river just below Taranpur.

You don't see the connection between all this and the other thriller I spoke of at the beginning? Of course you don't, and no more did I, or I should not have set forth alone for a shot at that leopard, a day or two later, and left Ballia to take care of himself as best he could. How desperately he needed a bodyguard, armed to the teeth, I little realized, for no one in the neighborhood was aware that the giant bandit had regained his liberty and, with murder in his heart, even now roamed the jungle in search of a pock-marked Hindu lad.

How gaily I started out that morning! I love

a leopard hunt as dearly as I hate a leopard and, while making my way toward the island, I recalled with considerable pride some shots I had taken at wild creatures of that breed. Not many weeks before, I was touring the jungle in our mission cart, and quite a rabble of natives tagged behind for sake of the protection my rifle afforded. There was several young mothers in the crowd, cringing and shuddering as they clutched their babies tight, well knowing that at any moment some beast in quest of a toothsome morsel might spring upon them before I could get a chance to fire. Suddenly from the lips of a tawny, lithe woman with a babe at her breast came a shriek of "*Dekho, sahib! Ek moti beebut hai!*"—"Look, master! There is a great leopard!" I looked, and yonder in the road behind us stood the spotted beauty, head up, listening hungrily to an infant's wails. A Mohammedan in the crowd said, "Sir, he has been following us all the afternoon; I meant to tell you of it." How coolly they take such things!

I ordered my men to go on ahead while I stopped and hid in the tiger grass beside the road waiting for a shot. They made a great fuss and

begged me not to run such risks, but, as I insisted, they went on. Instead of mere tiger grass, I found a bush twenty feet from the road and under that bush I hid, face down.

Carefully I figured the distance and the leopard's probable pace and the minutes as they passed, and when I thought the beast must be directly in front of me I raised my head. Capital! There he was, slowly walking past, only a step or two beyond the place where I had expected him to be. A true shot right into his shoulder, and all was over, as the soft, flat bullet mushroomed out, and, smashing the bone, pierced the heart. Wild and hilarious, then, was the joy of the crowd. They came rushing back and formed a ring around their fallen foe, and leaped and danced, and offered the dead beast all manner of indignities, while the mothers fondly kissed their babes and thanked me for protecting them.

This, of course, was a pleasant thing to remember, but not all my affairs with leopards had ended as satisfactorily, and there was one in particular that still rankled. I was showing some lantern pictures to a crowd of natives in a jungle village one night and had stretched the screen

between two trees right next the wild jungle itself. The people were seated on the grass and, judging by their enthusiastic ejaculations of "*Are bapre,*" they were enjoying the show enormously. After I had exhibited all my American views, I tried them with a few animal pictures, and when I displayed a photograph of a fine spotted beast, the people shouted appreciatively, "*Dekho, beebut hai!*"—"See! It's a leopard." I left it on for several minutes, as they seemed to like it, and behold! right around the corner of the screen walked a live leopard and stood gazing at the picture. Evidently he had seen it from the jungle side, as it shone through, and had mistaken it for one of his kind and come to investigate. With a mighty yell, the men tumbled over one another in their haste to get away, while the leopard, as much surprised as they, slunk off into the jungle and vanished before I could run six steps toward our carts for my rifle. Too bad! I registered a vow then and there that the next leopard to cross my path should not escape me so easily.

Besides, I have a personal rancor against leopards, not without good reason. One sizzling hot

night, while I was away, my wife and babies were sleeping out under strong nets, and, along about midnight, Mrs. Musser awoke with a feeling of insecurity, and sat up in her cot, and there, sniffing close to the babies' bed, stood a big leopard in the moonlight. She shouted and clapped her hands, and the brute slipped away down a nearby ravine, but I protest that this sort of thing is too serious by far.

I had it in for leopards ever after, and you will easily enough understand my mood as I set out for the island just below Taranpur, quite unmindful of Ballia, who remained behind. I came to a deep pool, out of which jutted big rocks, where huge crocodiles lay basking in the sunshine. Upstream a little way there was a foaming cataract.

Above the cataract, I found that there was an island in the stream—as nearly as I could judge, the very island where, according to report, the leopard had established himself. On the farther side of the island, the current ran swift and deep, frothing at the foot of a tall and almost perpendicular cliff. On the side toward me, it was swift but shallow, and a man could cross over.

I crossed. Warily I prowled the forest that covered the island, searching, as I went, for evidences that the leopard had been there and little recking that I was soon to face a human beast of prey far more cruel than any leopard. But look! Who and what was that—yonder at the brink of the cliff, across the further branch of stream? A man—a man of unusual size—and staggering!

Through the veil of tropical foliage along the cliff, I saw him stagger, but I failed to recognize that he carried a heavy burden. I thought he must be drunk.

It was by no means an absurd conjecture. Only a short while before, I had seen what a monstrous curse drink is in India. Away down in the jungles, six days' journey from the nearest railway station, we were traveling along the palm-shaded road. You have seen palms in hot-houses and botanical gardens; here they grow wild, some as tall as a house, some barely a foot high, while the most beautiful rose twenty feet from the ground and had a leaf spread twenty feet across, and on all sides the clusters of coconuts hung with their brown hulls, three-cornered,

just below the great central bud, the living flower of the tree. As we came to a field of these splendid trees, all planted in rows or groups, I saw a village in the middle of the grove—twenty mud houses, full of holes, their roofs covered with grass, dry and yellow. Not a man, woman, or child was to be seen. I said to our guide, "Is this a deserted village?" He answered, "No *sahib*; it's a toddy town." We walked through it. The trees all had tiny bamboo ladders tied to their trunks with fiber rope, and at the top of each coconut palm there was a great gash cut, and into this gash was thrust a bamboo drain pipe, and at the end of it a pot was tied to catch the sap. From that sap the natives made a diabolically intoxicating drink.

In the first house I entered lay a man, his wife, and three children aged nine and ten and a baby two years old, all sodden drunk. I shook the man, but his head wagged to and fro, and he never even opened his eyes. I picked up the baby. It was impossible to awaken it, and the poor little creature's breath smelt strongly of toddy. The other children lay like dead in a heap of filthy rags.

From house to house I went, trying to find someone awake, but all were drunk and helpless. Sometimes an old man and an old woman were the sole occupants of a dirty hovel; sometimes I found only a man and a dog, and always the huts were filthy beyond words, for the drunken stupor lasts for months—as soon as a native comes back to semi-consciousness he drinks again and lies down. The contrast between the beautiful palms and the squalor and degradation in the village beneath them seemed like a spoken protest against the desecration of a lovely spot “where every prospect pleases and only man is vile.”

Remembering the experience so vividly, I naturally thought first of drunkenness when I saw the huge fellow on the cliff stagger toward its very brink. A moment more and he might lose his footing completely, fall into the stream below, and be swept over the cataract into the crocodile pool, where death was certain.

I shouted in Telegu, “Look out, man, or you’re a goner!” but he paid no attention—he was too drunk, I concluded.

There are times when it comes in handy to be a crack shot with a rifle, as some poor fellow’s

life may depend on your skill. One evening a friend of mine, an engineer, was sitting out on my piazza, and a black panther sneaked up in the dark, grabbed him before he could wink, and made off with him into the pitchy darkness. I dashed to the rescue. There was a scuffle. I could hear it. Presently, the man, with the beast on top of him, crawled into a streak of light from the door I had left open as I ran out. I raised my rifle, and, with my heart in my mouth and my blood running cold, let drive. Hurrah! The bullet missed the man and killed the panther. If I could trust my aim in a crisis like that, it seemed to me that I could trust it now. Shouts failed to stop the big Hindu on the cliff, but I had a notion that bullets would succeed, as even a drunken man will respect bullets, and reasoned that anybody drunk enough to stagger in that style would be too stupid to see that the shots were mere warnings.

I realized, of course, that I ran awful risks of hitting him, but consider; he had to be stopped—otherwise he was practically doomed. The first shot went over his head, as I intended it to. He must have heard it sing. Yet he came on,

lurching and reeling, just as if nothing had happened. I gave him another, a couple of yards to one side of him, and saw it kick up the dirt. Still he came on. The third shot, hitting closer than I intended it to, struck directly before his feet. At that, he dropped his burden on the ground, straightened up to a gigantic height, and, with a yell of hideous rage, turned and fled—not staggering, either, and I saw in a flash that he had been sober all along. No amount of scare could bring a man out of crazy intoxication as quickly as that.

There on the ground at the top of the cliff lay the burden he had dropped—a queer sort of burden about six feet long and enclosed in a coarse sack. I gazed at it intently, trying to guess what it was, and after a moment or two I saw it move, and then for the first time I understood what the whole thing meant.

About two hundred yards upstream from where I stood, there was a shallow place where, despite the rapids foaming over loose rocks and threatening to carry you over the cataract, it seemed possible to get across. I chanced it. Twice I slipped and fell in, and oh, the relief

when I reached the opposite bank and found a gully through which I could clamber up to the top. Dripping, breathless, and horror-stricken, I ran along the cliff to the spot where our bandit had dropped his burden.

It was not moving now. No sound came from it. As I bent down to rip open the sack, I thought, "Too late! I've saved the big outlaw, but not his victim."

Yet see! When I slashed the sack with my hunting knife, there was the pock-marked face of a Hindu lad, and, while he was unable to speak, as his assailant had gagged him, his eyelids quivered and I knew he was alive.

It was quite a job getting him free. After beating him horribly, the giant had bound his hand and foot and trussed him up like a fowl, in which condition Ballia was to have gone over the cliff with a waterfall waiting him, and after that the crocodiles. That scene was more thrilling and furthermore it was true—no make-believe story or picture just given to entertain about it. No, sir!

The outlaw's subsequent career was a brief one—hideous while it lasted, though soon over—but Ballia's had hardly more than begun. I said,

“Ballia, I think this escape means that you were intended for great things. You’re no spell-binder, I realize; you can’t sway a crowd; but you can drag Hindus out of Hinduism one at a time with bigger results than ever before. Go to it!” He did—and made good.

THE END

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